UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

"BORROWED BLACKNESS": A CASE STUDY OF BLACK IDENTITY AND CULTURAL FORMATION AMONG A GROUP OF AFRICAN CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

BY

JENNIFER ROSEMARIE KELLY ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2001

National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-60309-1

Canada

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Library Release Form

Name of Author: Jennifer Rosemarie. Kelly

Title of Thesis: "Borrowed Blackness": A Case Study of Black Identity and Cultural Formation Among a Group of African Canadian High School Students

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted: 2001

Permission is hereby granted to the University of Alberta Library to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves all other publication and other rights in association with the copyright in the thesis, and except as herein before provided, neither the thesis nor any substantial portion thereof may be printed or otherwise reproduced in any material form whatever without the author's prior written permission.

JR Kelly

Jennifer Rosemarie Kelly
44, Lombard Crescent
St. Albert, Alberta T8N 3N2

Date: 17th April 2001

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommended to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **"BORROWED BLACKNESS": A CASE STUDY OF BLACK IDENTITY AND CULTURAL FORMATION AMONG A GROUP OF AFRICAN CANADIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS** submitted by JENNIFER ROSEMARIE KELLY in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION.

Dr. Anne Marie Decore
(Co-supervisor)

Dr. Raymond A. Morrow
(Co-supervisor)

Dr. Jerrold L. Kachur
(Committee Member)

Dr. Philomina E. Okeke
(Committee Member)

Dr. Ali. A. Abdi
(Committee Member)

Dr. Cameron McCarthy
(External Examiner)

Margaret Wilson
Dr. Margaret Wilson
(Committee Chair)

Date Feb 16/01

Abstract

This study, based on research conducted with African Canadian high school students, examines the ways in which media culture intersects formation of black identities. Drawing on a critical cultural studies framework the study discusses how these youths receive, interpret and make use of media and youth culture that they encounter in their everyday lives. In particular the students' narratives illustrate the ways in which the proliferation of media images (music, magazines, films, and television) from the US affect the formation of an African Canadian identity. It highlights an intersection of the local and the global–how media gets proliferated across national borders and comes to produce a hegemonic culture in Canada.

Data generation and analysis is based on John Thompson's "depth hermeneutics." This process of interpreting and reinterpreting the students' discourses on popular youth culture is achieved via a three phase process that starts with an analysis of the theorisation of cultural studies literature, moves through formal or discursive analysis and finally undertakes an interpretation /reinterpretation of the existing data.

The research highlights how analysis of the concept of ideology is still important despite more recent emphases on theories of postmodernism. The narratives reinforce our recognition of how, despite a discourse of critique, these youths still consume media culture. Style is highlighted as less than innocent, as a tool for differentiation from as well as alignment with "others." Despite the casual wearing and displaying of the body–especially the male body–style is something to be worked at. The conclusion of this study is that "culture as the everyday" offers a valuable insight into the ways in which discourses collide and compete in the formation of black identities. The students' narratives reveal that their identity formation is a complex cultural process involving the production of raced, classed, sexualized and religious selves. The concluding section discusses the educational implications of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the students who made this all possible by offering their time and insights – despite an often-busy school timetable. I would like to dedicate this work to them and their peers. Thanks also to the administrators of the school where I undertook my research and who supported my access to their school. In particular I would like to thank Rosalind Smith for smoothing the way for me.

I would like to acknowledge the time and effort of my committee members especially Dr. Ann Marie Decore, Dr. Ray Morrow, and Dr. Jerry Kachur who took time out of their hectic schedule to read the earlier drafts of this thesis.

As well I acknowledge the collegial and supportive atmosphere created by the other members of my committee, Dr. Peggy Wilson, who chaired my oral defense, Dr. Philomena Okeke and Dr. Ali Abdi.

I must also thank my family who has suffered long and hard as I have worked my way through this thesis: Rosa, Clara, Leon & Bruce—there at last!

I acknowledge all others I have met as a graduate student—you have all contributed to what has been in so many ways a learning experience.

Table of Contents

Chapter **Page**

INTRODUCTION TO THESIS TOPIC 1
Notes..6

CHAPTER 1. MAPPING THE TERRAIN: Theorising Media Culture......7
Theorising Media Culture..8
Ideology 20
Notes...27

CHAPTER 2. MAPPING THE TERRAIN: Theorising Blackness..........28
Race/Racialization...33
Representation 35
Black Identity...38
Hybridisation 45
Notes...48

CHAPTER 3. LAYING THE RESEARCH TRAIL 44
Conception of Research Question 44
Gestation of Research Question 56
Collection of Data and Analysis 60
Notes...78

CHAPTER 4. A SENSE OF BELONGING.......................................79

School Climate 80
African Canadian Presence in Alberta..............................88
African Canadian Identity 94
Notes...107

CHAPTER 5. DIASPORA AS COLLECTIVITY.............................108
Common Sites of Identification.......................................108
Music as a Source of the Diaspora 119
Notes...132

CHAPTER 6. MUSIC & REGIMES OF REPRESENTATION 133
Introduction to Chapters Six-Nine...................................133
Black Youth Culture 135
Notes...163

CHAPTER 7. FILMS & REGIMES OF REPRESENTATION..............164
Films 164
Television and Music Videos 174
Notes...182

CHAPTER 8. RIDING THE PUFFY TRAIN...183
Magazines 184
Performing Style..195
Notes...202

CHAPTER 9. URBAN LEGEND...203
Urban Legend 203
North –South/East-West..208
Notes...220

CHAPTER 10. BORROWED BLACKNESS...221
Borrowed Blackness 222
Regime of Representation...228
Notes...237

CHAPTER 11. STYLISH SOLIDARITY...238
Slang, Slurs & Development of a Public Sphere 238
Stylish Solidarity...246
Knowledge and Experience 254
Notes...264

CHAPTER 12. BRINGING IT BACK HOME 265

BIBLIOGRAPHY...284

APPENDIX A: Questioning Route..302

APPENDIX B: Letter to Participants..303

Thesis Legend

Transcription Conventions

- [pause] indicates pause for thought or participant uncertain about subject under discussion
- [insertion by author]
- // overlap in conversation between interviewer and participant.
- …omitted dialogue
- "uh huh" – sound of agreement
- "nuh nuh" – sound of disagreement

- **J: = Jennifer Kelly (researcher)**

Terminology

- "Hood" term for neighbourhood. Area that one identifies with as "home," where friends are located.

- "wicked" good
- "ill" --good
- "bad" --good

All students have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their identities.

Introduction to Thesis

The production of meaning and the production of pleasure are mutually constitutive of who students are, the view that they have of themselves, and how they construct a particular version of their future. (Giroux, 1989, p. 4)

The foci of this study are identity-in-formation among a group of African- Canadian youths in Alberta, Canada and the ways in which this process of formation is mediated by "popular" youth culture. As such the study highlights "media reception" – the ways in which popular cultural texts are received, perceived and used to make meaning by a specific group of African Canadian (Black) high school students. Of import to the study is the actuality that at present media images are more widely accessible, via digital images, across geographic boundaries than at any other historical period of capitalism (Gilroy, 1993; Giddens, 1991; Jameson, 1991). My subsidiary operational research questions developed from literature review, and (Kelly, 1998) are:

- In what ways do a group of African Canadian students make use of media culture to give meaning to their sense of identity?

- How do these students make use of popular cultural forms such as music, television programmes and magazines to make identifications with or distinctions from others?

- How do the students use popular culture to make meaning in relation to race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity?

Within the thesis, exploration of the links between globalized popular culture and local identity formation among black students is explored via "depth hermeneutics," a methodological framework identified by John Thompson (1990). Use of such a methodological framework in my study implies that popular culture is recognised as a site of "meaningful symbolic construction" –a site that requires re-interpretation of what has already been interpreted by the student participants (p. 272). This process of interpreting and reinterpreting the students discourses on popular youth culture is achieved via a three phase process that starts with an analysis of the theorisation of cultural studies literature, moves through to formal or discursive analysis and finally undertakes an interpretation /reinterpretation of the existing data. Along with the latter, the chapter analyses the social historical developments of cultural studies' theorisation of popular culture and mass culture.

Such a reading of the social-historical development of the critical cultural studies literature is necessary because interpretation of the students' discussions of media are not theorised in a vacuum. But rather "they are contextualized social phenomena, they are produced, circulated and received within specific social-historical locations" (Thompson, 1990, p. 273). In a similar vein chapter two "Mapping the Terrain." involves not just a review of the cultural studies literature, but to some extent its placement in a social-historical discourse.

The second phase of the study centres on the discourse of the students and attempts to reconstruct their doxa – the opinions, beliefs, and understandings that are shared by the individuals who comprise the social world – via the use of interviews within a critical ethnographic framework. Using observation, initial focus group meetings, followed by in–depth semi-structured individual interviews the study attempts to identify the ways in which students relate to representation of blackness within popular cultural forms such as music, televisual images, and magazines.

Analysis of the students' discourses draw on a narrative structure that emphasises the roles, characters and patterns common to a set of narratives, as well as, to a lesser extent, discursive or rhetorical psychology, which emphasises the "role of language in constructing psychological phenomena" (Billig, 1997, p. 207). Such primarily narrative-based analysis allows for a reconstruction and interpretation, through discourse, of the students' everyday lives wherein culture is defined as "ordinary" (Williams, 1958). As well, the thesis analyses the ways in which blackness is understood locally, and in relation to representations that come from beyond the Canadian borders and in so doing indicate the ways in which students position themselves in relation to "hood"[1] discourses that emanate from media culture. So it is that insights are gained as to how students use media to indicate distinctions from and affinity with others based on perceptions of race, class, ethnicity, and religion and thus enable or constrain specific subject positions. The advantage of the latter recognition of the use value of media with regard to subjectivity is that one can then start to view the ways in which the individual and society are interconnected.

The third phase, of the study consists of interpretation/ reinterpretation of the discourse analysis data in conjunction with the social-historical analysis of Alberta, Canada. Whereas the discursive analysis proceeds by breaking down, and dividing up the data to unveil patterns and devices which operate within a discursive framework, reinterpretation "proceeds by synthesis by the creative construction of possible meanings" (Thompson, 1990, p. 289). This linking of analysis thus illustrates the way that wider social-historical, political, and economic structures intersect the students' lived experiences to provide a basis for the construction of meanings in relation to understandings of themselves. Thus the reading of the students' narratives will try to emphasise "the social significance and social consequences of certain versions, accounts and narratives" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 105).

Although not an overt theme within the study, movement emerges as an overarching conceptual schema-a movement of peoples, ideas, and images which at times seems to be in tension with the perceived stability of a national identity. Within the thesis this flow of images acts as a metaphor for understanding the complex, hybridised, and intertextual ways in which the student narratives are constructed.

Further, the thesis analyses the way that movement between geographic points affects formation of cultures and black identities: the ways in which subject positions are enabled and constrained by institutional formations such as family, religion and schools. As a result of this movement, and to some extent instability, the thesis reveals the various ways in which definitions and construction of the "real," via the televisual, and the aural, become a touchstone for the students during the process of meaning-making (Berger & Luckman, 1967).

This specific historical period of late twentieth early twenty-first century has produced a huge growth in the ability of students to access media technology and simulation, all of which have meant an expansion of the "language" that is available for use in social interaction. This process of "simulation," akin to what Baudrillard identifies as hyper-reality – the loss of the "real," where distinctions between surface and depth, the real and the imaginary no longer exist'' (Sims, 1998, p. 281) –has resulted, to some extent, in a foregrounding of realism. Such a state of perceived hyper-reality changes the nature and conception of the ways in which subjects relate to the constructed world perceived as external to the self. In other words the students' narratives highlight the ways in which technological changes in the late twentieth century have enabled access to social spaces previously bounded by time and geography a process identified by Thompson (1990) as *mediazation* – a flow of images across different geographic and regional locations[2].

Consequently, this blurring of the boundaries between the local and the global has led to a reconceptualisation of social experiences, knowledge and identity. Of import, though not always explicit, is the way in which this process of mediazation, this proliferation of images across time and space, is concomitant with a change in the ways in which we come to redefine give meaning to everyday lives. For many of the African Canadian students interviewed, this world of changing representations, culture and media that extends beyond geographic boundaries becomes important symbolic carriers for discourses of identity and "reality." So it is that within these practices of consumption that the students draw on media culture in order to represent and give meaning to everyday experiences and their identities. As Herman Gray (1995) indicates, "what characterises youth culture in the 1990s and therefore warrants careful attention is the central role of the commercial cultural industry and mass media in this process" (p. 153). In analysing these links between the local identity and the global formations Appadurai (1990) identifies not only a tension between homogenisation and heterogenization but also agues that:

> …because of the disjunctive and unstable interplay of commerce, media, national policies and consumer fantasies, ethnicity, once a genie contained in the bottle of some sort of locality (however large) has now become a global force, forever slipping in and through the cracks between states and borders. (p. 306)

In terms of my conceptualisation and understanding of black identity, culture, and media, the work of Gilroy (1996), Hall (1991), hooks (1990), Omi & Winant (1993), Dei (1996), Walcott (1995), Alexis (1995), and Bannerji (1995), Rose (1994), and Gray (1995) on social formation and representation of "race" and identity in Britain, North America and Canada have proved useful texts. Such texts enable my theorising to move from an essentialist standpoint of viewing "race" and identity as fixed entities towards a position that recognises race and identity as socially constructed and not necessarily homogenous in terms of constituents. Recognition of such fluidity problematises the concept of black identity and community–the idea that black students have an automatic affinity with each other. Yet, within the study, there is also recognition of what Paul Gilroy describes as "the changing same" in other words, that historical memory also plays a role in the formation of culture and meanings that students attribute to various everyday activities. Exploration of identity and race as social constructs also allows for the consequent recognition "that there is not one 'culture' in 'society' but that any 'society' consists of a plurality of historically specific cultures structured in domination and subordination" (Stratton & Ang, 1996, p. 377).

This recognition of the fluidity of identity enables exploration of the way black students individually and collectively manage incoherent and conflictual racial meanings and identities in their school lives. In conjunction with the latter, the viability of a hybrid racial identity that does not require total adoption or rejection of a dominant culture is analysed (Bhabha, 1990; Hall, 1990). Investigation of this hybrid identity indicates how some students who are defined as "mixed" come to position themselves in relation to a black identity. The definition of identity that underscores my research is congruent with Stuart Hall's postulation that "identity is a narrative of the self; it is the story that we tell about the self in order to know who we are" (Hall, 1991, p. 16). My study explores the stories that black students tell about themselves; a story often mediated by youth culture. Analysis of such media culture reveals a site for the students to invest cultural objects with meanings and to access a venue within which these meanings are remade and argued over in a range of everyday encounters. In some ways, the study attempts to take up Angela McRobbie's (1991) challenge for cultural studies to return to ethnographic cultural analysis which takes as it's object of study '[t]he lived experience which breathes life into [the] ... inanimate objects [of popular culture] (pp. 3-4).

Organisation of Thesis

Overview of Chapters

The first chapters "Mapping the Terrain of Literature I and II " identifies the conceptual tools drawn on from sociology and critical cultural studies that are useful in analysing the relations between individual students and the diaspora. As well, hegemony and ideology are highlighted to indicate the ongoing theoretical tensions between agency and determinism with regard to media reception. Chapter three, "Laying Down the Path: A Methodology," concentrates on laying out an audit trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) that identifies methodological concerns and issues. It lays out the selection of method and indicates how the student sample was chosen as well as some of philosophical issues that can arise during the process of interviewing and generating data. At some points ethnographic descriptions of the students have been omitted in order to protect their identities. In line with qualitative research my chapter draws on the research journal that I kept during the various stages of research. Chapters four through to nine, analyse the students' discourses in order to ascertain common patterns and meanings developed across the data. From this analysis of discourse, themes relating to black identification, regimes of representations, style and subjectivity are highlighted. It is evident from these three chapters that blackness is a heterogeneous rather than homogenous identity as is indicated by the students orientations to collectivity, religion, gender and ethnicity. As well, these chapters indicate that although the students are categorised as African Canadians by this study they have other identities that take precedence at differing moments during their lives. For example, these students are also "youths" in a relation of dominance to the social category adult. In the final chapter a discussion is undertaken of the main themes from earlier chapters as I "propose criteria, formulate categories and draw distinctions" (Thompson 1990, p. 283) during a process of analysing social structures in the students' lives.

Notes

---

[1] The "hood' representations are those that are represented in films such as Boyz N' Hood, Menace to Society, that portray Black males as tough, macho men who know how to keep women in line. Rappers whose misogynist lyrics are seen as representation of blackness often reinforce such images. For a useful analysis of these issues see bell hooks, (1994) article Gangsta Culture—Sexism, Misogyny Who Will Take the Rap.

[2] This process of mediazation, and its potential to expand beyond boundaries has recently been highlighted by the merger of America ON Line – the worlds biggest internet provider - and Time Warner -the US information giant. Seen, to date, as the world's fourth largest corporation after Microsoft, General electric and Cisco the newly merged corporation was described by participants as "the world's first fully integrated media and communication company for the Internet Century" (Paul Murphy & John Casey, "Media giants in $350bn tie up," *The Guardian Weekly*, January 13-January 19 2000 vol. 162/No 3).

Chapter 1

Mapping the Terrain of Literature I: Theorizing Media

Introduction

This chapter draws on sociological literature in general, and critical cultural studies literature in particular, to highlight the ways in which theorization accounts for the relationship between media culture and audience receptivity. It is this relationship between media culture, (i.e. music, films, music videos and television) and its reception by African Canadian students that is at the heart of my study.

The highlighted literature in general focuses on understandings of "culture" and the ways in which such understandings and interpretations of the concept have affected theoretical responses and analyses of the development of mass cultural production. Although this early discussion does not always highlight blackness, it does indicate some of the assumptions that underlie the conception of cultural studies and thus my own study. Chronological in presentation, the discussion moves from the institutionalized form of critical cultural studies at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in Birmingham, United Kingdom through to the more recent formation of the subcategory "Black Cultural Studies" that spans the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). Throughout the chapter I not only highlight various concepts central to critical cultural studies, but also indicate that my chosen theoretical framework is a contested area of knowledge. Its relationship to my central topic of black identity formation was not an easy and natural alliance. In some ways I use this chapter to highlight Charlotte Brunsdon's (1996) phrase that "cultural studies was not always already politically chic." My mapping of the theoretical terrain is divided into two chapters. The first chapter deals with theorisation of the relationship between media and its audience, while the second chapter deals more directly with theorisation of blackness from within a critical cultural studies framework. Media in general, as a form of mass cultural production, is highlighted, as well as more specifically theoretical accounts of audience reception of popular cultural forms such as music, films, and television. By way of caution I should also add that the purpose of this review/mapping is not to trawl endlessly through the related literature, but to highlight or orient the reader to some of the key conceptual tools that I found useful in thinking through this study. As well, I allude to specific texts and authors that have influenced, through various detours, my thinking about and the framing of my study. Consequently, the process of unfolding that takes place within this chapter is more in terms of developing a set of tools (as explained in my methodology chapter) to enable a degree of *self-reflexivity*–a necessary step toward establishing *construct validity* within my study.

Theorising Media Culture

Much of the theoretical discussion of the forms of media culture highlighted by my study has been subsumed within value-laden descriptors such as "popular culture" and "mass culture." It may well be more precise to use the descriptor "media culture" as developed in the work of Doug Kellner (1995), however, I have decided to adhere to the more familiar terminologies of "popular culture" and "mass culture." Although used interchangeably, at times, the two descriptors have different etymologies. Cultural theorist Jim McGuigan (1997), in recognising this distinction, argues that:

> [p]opular culture, in the folkish sense, was seen as produced by "the people," as actively made by them and expressing their distinctive social experiences, attitudes and values. In contrast, the pejorative conception of mass culture, in Left, Right and Centrist versions, stressed media manipulation of popular tastes and the passive consumption of commodified culture. (p. 138)

As McGuigan intimates within his argument, relations of power as well as understandings of culture in general are intertwined with the use of these descriptors. Viewed as part of discourses that are used to reinforce or challenge specific understandings of the word culture and problematic in definition and use, we should also perhaps bear in mind John Hartley's (1994) postulation that culture:

> is multi-discursive; it can be mobilized in a number of different discourses. This means that you cannot import a fixed definition into any and every context and expect it to make sense. What you have to do is identify the context itself. (p. 68)

I draw attention to Hartley's postulation in order to highlight that although media culture is the primary focus of discussion, developing an understanding of meaning attached to culture and cultural practices is also important.

Throughout the twentieth century critical cultural theorists have tried to analyse, as this study does, and account for the effect of mass communication on the production of individual and group culture (Adorno, 1991; Bell, 1976; Marcuse, 1968; McLuhan, 1967; Thompson, 1990; Jameson, 1991). The dominant technical medium of mass communication has undergone changes–from newspapers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, through to television in the mid-twentieth century, and finally to the internet. Overall, the question as to the effect of media on the working population has provided fertile and often contentious grounds for theorisation.

For some theorists, such as Baudrillard, the social effects of present-day mass communication and its production can be explained as a break with modernism; a new postmodern cultural epoch wherein, to quote Marshall Berman "all that's solid melts into air." However, for cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall (1996), this increase in the ability of the media to reach out, digitally, to wider geographic areas, and to break down barriers between time and space is a stage of capitalism. His analysis does not identify this breaking down of barriers with a profound shift and disjuncture in the way society is organised. Instead, Hall argues that analysis suggests continuities and "the accentuation of certain important tendencies in the culture of the overdeveloped "west" which, if we understand the complex histories of modernism properly, have been in play in an uneven way since modernism" (p. 133). Douglas Kellner (1999), who agrees that what is being experienced with the growth in information and media technology is related to a stage of capitalism, also identifies another important factor, namely, a change in analytic emphasis by social theorists. Focussing on cultural studies theorists in particular, he highlights how the:

> forms of cultural studies developed from the late 1970s to the present, in contrast to the earlier stages, theorise a shift from the stage of state monopoly capitalism or Fordism, rooted in mass production and consumption to a new regime of capital and social order, some times described as "post-Fordism" (Harvey 1989) or "postmodernism" (Jameson 1991), and characterising a transnational and global capital that valorizes difference, multiplicity, eclecticism, populism, and intensified consumerism in a new information /entertainment society. (p. 5)

Thus, explanations of the expansion of media and information into larger geographic areas are contested. While some theorists view the change in social dynamics as part of the logic of late capitalism, for others this shift removes the sense of reality and space from our everyday understandings.

For other cultural theorists, such as John Thompson, it is not just the economic effects of globalisation that are of concern. The social and cultural effects of the breaking down of time-space barriers between geographic regions–a process whereby social interaction is no longer based upon face-to-face interaction within the same physical locale are a concern as well. Thus, the breaking down of economic barriers via the growth in information and media technology affects social relations within society. Anthony Giddens, (1990) and David Harvey (1989) are two theorists whose analytic skills have been at the forefront of this "taking account of" change in time and space, where space is no longer "confined to what one could perceive, to one's immediate location" (Waters, 1995, p. 49). Although both theorists analyse the process of globalization, their conceptualisation differs in the ways that they account for these changes in time and space. In making a distinction between the two theorists, Malcolm Waters (1995) argues that Harvey's conception of time shrinking is more valuable than that of Giddens' space-time distanciation that implies a stretching of time and place (p. 58). For other theorists it is not just the general stretching of time and space that is of concern, but also the "process by which the transmission of symbolic forms becomes increasingly mediated by technical and institutional apparatuses of the media industries" (pp. 3-4). This is what John Thompson (1990) identifies as "mediazation," the broadcasting of media and the transmission of messages via electromagnetic waves to an indeterminate and extended audience" (p. 14). With regard to my study, the link with this transmission of symbolic messages is that the:

> ever more sophisticated international communications technologies and the products of transnational media corporations dissolve distance and suspend time, and in doing so create new and unpredictable forms of connection, identification and cultural affinity, but also dislocation and disjuncture between people, places and cultures. (Gillespie, 1995, p. 7)

It is Marie Gillespie's latter identification of the ways in which communication technologies create new and unpredictable forms of connection that is pertinent to this study: the students' ability to access "outer national" media sources for identification. In particular, popular culture has been one area in which mainstream white culture has been able to provide an ideological framework of symbols, concepts and images through which we understand, interpret and represent "racial differences" (Omi, 1989, p. 114). Thus, the ability of the United States to dissipate its cultural forms around the globe via digital pulses has an effect on the formation of race as a social construct as well as on black identity in Canada. The effectiveness of this process is encapsulated by Anthony Giddens' (1990) insight that:

> modernity increasingly tears space away from place by fostering relations between "absent" others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction. In conditions of

> modernity . . . locales are thoroughly penetrated by and shaped in terms of social influences quite distant from them. What structures that locale is not simply that which is present on the scene; the "visible form" of the locale conceals the distance relations which determine its nature. (p. 18)

Although critical cultural studies is the main theoretical framework used in the analysis, subsequent interpretation, and reinterpretation of my data, it also has to be recognised that other theories of culture exist outside the cultural studies framework. For example, in both Germany and North America cultural theorists were engaged in trying to understand the growth of industrialisation, technology, and mass production of culture on populations. Not often acknowledged within the mainstream cultural studies literature,[1] some of the earliest critiques of media culture and its effect on social formations emerged from Germany through the early work of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Douglas Kellner (1999) argues that:

> for some decades now, British cultural studies have tended to either disregard or caricature in a hostile manner the critique of mass culture developed by the Frankfurt school. The Frankfurt school has repeatedly been stigmatised as elitist and reductionist, or simply ignored in discussion of the methods and enterprise of cultural studies. (p. 3)

The Frankfurt School,[2] headed up primarily by left-leaning German-Jewish intellectuals, saw as its main purpose to critique a developing mass culture which reproduced the fragmentation and alienation apparent within capitalist economic production. In what can be seen as in a similar vein to the culture/civilization debate that took place in the UK during the late '40s, '50s and '60s; these German social theorists regarded, with pessimism, the growing industrialization and development of mass culture. In particular, the foremost critic in this area, Theodor Adorno, argues that the development of mass culture, in tandem with the development of capitalism, was the source for the mass stupification of society in the interests of what he identified as the "culture industries." In mirroring the features of industrial production; "commodification," "standardization" and "massification," the culture industries were seen as providing ideological legitimation for the consumer industries. While such a critique of capitalism would seem to align the perspectives of these critical theorists with classical Marxism, their denial of the economy as the sole determinant of social relations in society places them within the realm of neo-Hegelian Marxism and the work of Lukacs. For these early critical cultural theorists the production and reception of mass culture was the site for the development of ideology–a direct link between individual receptivity and collective consciousness. Such a process was one where symbolic forms become carriers of ideology; an ideology that "dupes" the working classes and stymies their ability to recognise their "true" conditions of oppression. The following extract from Adorno's (1991) text *The Culture Industry* gives a flavour of this perspective:

> The total effect of the culture industry is one of anti-enlightenment, in which as Horkheimer and I have noted, enlightenment, that is the progressive technical domination, becomes mass deception and is turned into a means of fettering consciousness, independent individuals who judge and decide consciously for themselves...while obstructing the emancipation for which human beings are as ripe as the productive forces of the epoch permit. (p. 92)

The theories of the early Frankfurt school, in particular Adorno and Horkeimer, can be critiqued on various fronts. First, as elitist, in that the underlying cultural theory is normative in its assumptions and based on the assumption that they "know what's best" for the working class. Second, that by trying to read off the consequences of cultural products from the products themselves, they can be charged with what Thompson (1990) identifies as "the fallacy of internalism" – trying "to read off the consequences of cultural products from the products themselves" (p. 105). However, despite the latter negative critique, theorists such as Kellner (1999) argue that valuable theorisation emerged from their work in that the:

> . . . Frankfurt school model of the culture industry did articulate the important social roles of media culture during a specific regime of capital and provided a model, still of use, of a highly commercial and technologically-advanced culture that serves the needs of dominant corporate interests, plays a major role in ideological reproduction, and in enculturating individuals into the dominant system of needs, thought and behaviour. (p. 3)

In the United Kingdom, theorisation of a comparable process of industrialisation and production of mass culture was cautionary, and revealed similar but differing ways in which existing discourses became intertwined with a general critique of mass culture. Interestingly, this early twentieth-century British representation of mass culture, as aligned with Americanisation and commodification, is similar to the present-day fears voiced by some critics with regard to the spread of American culture via the internet and cable television. They are concerned with the "fear of vulgarity," and "loss of distinction." Thus, within Canadian society of the early twenty-first century, US-based media culture is still regarded as very much of a threat to maintaining an identity that is distinct from that of the US. This threat is echoed in this thesis through the tension between African American youth culture and construction of an African Canadian youth culture.

Whereas the theorisation by the Frankfurt school fell within the culture/civilisation debate and was shaped by disillusionment with working class consciousness, critique in the UK was different, in some ways, drawing on existing discourses and analyses of class to develop their critique. Associated with these early critiques are three seminal texts of British cultural analysis written by Richard Hoggart (1957) *The Uses of Literacy*; Raymond Williams (1958) *Culture and Society*; and E. P. Thompson (1963) *The Making of the English Working Class*. These early cultural texts, regarded as representative of theorisation on the culturalist wing of culture studies, illustrate a shift in the ways in which nondominant cultures were regarded. Not only is the general tone of the three books supportive of working class culture, but unlike the Frankfurt School, all three British theorists were involved in educating working class adults. Two of the authors, Williams and Hoggart, were "scholarship boys" from working class families, writing about their own experiences. Thus the latter authors positioned themselves as working class in contrast to middle/upper class theorists within the Frankfurt School, who were writing about the experiences of the "Other." This ability of Williams and Hoggart to place themselves within the cultures under analysis led, to some extent, to what those with a more structuralist orientation regard as a romanticization/valorization of working-class culture. This emphasis on working-class, lived experiences as of value was undergirded by a reconceptualisation of culture as not concerned with high culture. With Williams (1958/93), this new conceptualisation of culture was more akin to an anthropological definition–an understanding encapsulated by the phrase "culture is ordinary." For him:

> Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its purposes, and its own meanings. Every society expresses these in institutions, and in arts, and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment, under the pressure of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land. (p. 90)

These seminal texts can be seen as also about identity: "as an examination of class-based identity-in- process—transformed by historical forces that exceed their inscription in individual lives or consciousness and, at the same time, resisting that inevitable transformation" (Gilroy, 1996, p. 234). Thus, within the context of this study, Williams' aphorism translates into an emphasis on how culture is a representation of the everyday ways in which the students make meaning in their lives; both within and beyond the site of schooling. Such a conception of culture as everyday practices, rather than "high culture" enables one to focus on the ways in which people come to make sense of their surroundings and give meaning to their everyday interaction. It is with a similar understanding of culture that this study adheres: a positioning that conceives of culture as texts and practices of everyday life that students engage with, make meaning from, and consequently make use of to facilitate specific subject positions. The ways in which these early theorisations of class-based culture and identity make little reference to either race or gender are also noticeable in terms of my own study.

Williams' broadening definition also reflects culture as a site of contestation and offers insight into the ways in which discourses of "culture as the best," were challenged from the post World War II period onwards. The latter categorisation is reminiscent of what can be termed a culturalist framework, an orientation that is evident in the analysis of his fellow theorists Hoggart and Thompson. Both these theorists glorified the ways in which the working class made use of culture everyday (Hoggart, 1957; Thompson, 1963) and contrasted this somewhat idealistic representation with the growing negative influence of "American" culture. Strinati (1995) argues that:

> . . . in particular Hoggart was concerned about the manipulative and exploitative influence exercised over the working class community, especially over its more vulnerable younger members, by the America of Hollywood film, the cheap and brutal crime novel , "milk bars," and juke box music. (p. 28)

This argument, used in particular by Hoggart, was not just classed but also ethnocentric. As Hebdige (1988) highlights,

> . . . in Britain this fear of cultural homogenisation by the US culture industry became linked with discourses of ethnocentrism to articulate the complex ways in which from the 1930s onwards the United States (and its productive processes and scale of consumption) began to serve as the image of industrial barbarism; a country with no past and therefore no real culture, a country ruled by competition, profit and the drive to acquire. (p. 52)

Although Richard Johnson coined the term culturalism to indicate a sense of coherence in the work of Thompson, Hoggart and Williams, the three theorists subscribed to differing alignments within the political space of the "new left."

They were united more by an approach that recognised how an analysis of culture would involve:

> . . . the textual forms and documented practices of a culture–it is possible to reconstitute the patterned behaviour and constellations of ideas shared by the men and women who produce and consume the cultural texts and practices of that society. It is a perspective that stresses human agency. (Storey, 1993, p. 44)

While these three theorists were aligned with "left" politics, their analysis was one of class. As such they had difficulty accounting for the racism that was existent within working class culture. Further, Gilroy (1992) argues that their reproduction of left flag- waving nationalism reinforces the ways in which "race," "ethnicity," and "nationalism" have become linked in the modern lexicon of cultural racism. As he elaborates:

> Despite their enthusiasm for the work of C. L. R. James,[3] the British Communist Party's historians group (Hobsbawm, 1979) are culpable here, for the symbiotic legacies of the freeborn Englishman and of socialism in one country, legacies which frame their work, are both found to be wanting. This pairing can be traced through the work of Edward Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm, who contribute much to the foundations of cultural studies and who share an approach to economic, social, and cultural history in which the nation—understood as a stable receptacle for the class struggle—is the primary focus. (p. 192)

Further, analysis of the development of cultural studies indicates that this construction of a binary between culturalism and structuralism served to reinforce not only the racialized nationalism identified by Gilroy, but also, by extension, the "norm" of class as a focus of study, thus eliding other possible foci of analysis. Posited as opposites, Tony Bennett (1986) gives the following insight as to the construction of this binarism between the two theoretical wings of cultural analysis:

> Within the perspective of structuralism, popular culture was often regarded as an ideological machine that dictated the thoughts of the people . . . with law-like regularity . . . . Culturalism, by contrast, was often uncritically romantic in its celebration of popular culture as expressing the interests and values of subordinate social groups and classes." (p. xii)

This distinction between the two theoretical paradigms also extends into the areas of research with which each paradigm has been identified; thus structuralism was more influential in areas such as film, television and popular writing, whereas culturalism dominated in the study of sport and subcultures. Bennett (1986) suggests "it was almost as if the cultural sphere were divided into two hermetically separate regions, each exhibiting a different logic" (p. xii). The emergence of a form of cultural materialism based on a re-reading of Gramsci that moved beyond the excess of structuralist Marxism provided the framework for a reconciliation between "culturalist" and the "structuralist" wings of cultural studies and the development of a theory of resistance.

That this binary was a social construction rather than a "natural" formation can be seen in the reception of hegemony as a concept able to deal with some of the ambiguity created by the binarism of culturalism and structuralism. Hegemony offers a more flexible interpretation of cultural analysis. It allows movement away from class reductionism as well as offering an explanation of domination as something that is won, not automatically determined by class structure. In terms of definition, Hall (1996) argues that:

> Hegemony is that state of "total social authority" which, at certain specific conjunctures, a specific class alliance wins, by combinations of "coercion" and "consent," over the whole social formation, and its dominated classes: not only at the economic level, but also at the level of political and ideological leadership, in civil, intellectual, and moral life as well as at the material level, and over the terrain of civil society as well as in and through the condensed relations of the state. (p. 45)

The ability to highlight the deeply contradictory nature of culture and its consequent uses by individuals and groups sharpens our focus on its hegemonic as well as its counter-hegemonic potentials. This strategy helps us "to attend to the enormously complex and dynamic ways that people take from, identify with, reject, are duped by, and sometimes resist regimes of domination" (Gray, 1995, p. 7). It is also useful to note that with hegemony came recognition that differences are of importance in terms of working through a process in order to gain consensus. It is at this theoretical juncture that British cultural studies ignited within the crucible of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1960's, fuelling some of the most ground-breaking research in relation to culture in general, and popular culture in particular. Testimony to the latter positioning of cultural studies can be found in Hall's (1980) article "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies." Within the latter, he identifies not only Gramsci's contribution, via hegemony, to cultural studies but also the theoretical interruptions made by gender and race. In discussing the specific conceptual interruption made by race, Hall (1996) argues that:

> . . . actually getting cultural studies to put on its own agenda the critical questions of race, the politics of race, the resistance to racism, the critical questions of cultural politics, was itself a profound theoretical struggle, a struggle of which *Policing the Crisis* was, curiously, the first and very late example. (p. 270)

Although some theorists regard hegemony as providing an important theoretical bridge, for others with more poststructuralist leanings the concept of hegemony still retains a degree of reductivism and inability to deconstruct the essentialist category of class. As Post-Marxists, such as Laclau & Mouffe (1985) identify,

> . . . only if we renounce any epistemological prerogative based upon the ontologically privileged position of a "universal class" will it be possible seriously to discuss the present degree of validity of the Marxist categories. At this point we should state quite plainly that we are now situated in a post-Marxist terrain. It is no longer possible to maintain the conception of subjectivity and classes elaborated by Marxism, nor its vision of the historical course of capitalist development. (p. 4)

Thus, within this thesis the acceptance of hegemony as a concept allows for the students to be seen as more than oppressed passive consumers of media images of blackness within a dominant white society. As well the culturalist acceptance of "cultures from below" allows for the possibility that students can create cultures from the received media images.

National formations are important in terms of shaping the theorisation that emerges from such locations. Although I use theoretical explanations that attempt to account for social situations in UK and the US, I apply such forms of explanation with caution since:

> intellectual work, including both cultural studies and political economy is always and everywhere decisively touched and shaped by national formation (and subformation of class, race and gender, etc.) within which it is produced. This does not deny the importance of transnational and diasporic sites of culture, but suggests that such sites are understood only relative to the sovereign states which produce, enable, inhibit, wrap or merely tolerate such formations. (Carey, 1997, p. 16)

This ability of national formations to affect the tone of theorisation that takes place within geographic boundaries can be seen if one examines the ways in which

Communication Study as a discipline reacted to mass culture during the 1950s. It is noticeable that in contrast to the pessimism of the early Frankfurt School and the early forms of pre-institutionalised cultural studies, the work of the mass communications theorists in the US presented the media as "unproblematically reflective of society" (Hardt, 1996). Graeme Turner (1992), in accounting for this difference between mass communications theorists and those in Europe, argues that:

> [b]ecause it employed a very simple idea of media messages and of social structures, American mass communication research was able to see the media unproblematically reflective of society. If society was composed of a plurality of different groups, then this plurality would be expressed within the media—as in other aspects of democratic society. Capitalist democracies were congratulated for becoming "pluralist" societies in which all points of view contributed to the forming of cultural values—a broadly consensual formation founded on the tolerance and incorporation of difference. (p. 200)

The latter form of analysis is reflective of strong functionalist ideology dominant in US social theory during the 1950s and '60s. Hanno Hardt (1996) suggests that "radical dissent, including Marxist criticism of American society, remained outside the mainstream of mass communication research." From such a position it was unable to engage in a prolonged "debate concerning the foundations of social theory and the false optimism of social enquiries into the role and function of communication and media" (p. 109). Graeme Turner (1992) argues (via Hall, 1982) that this strong functionalist dominance and consensus-oriented mass communications research was only challenged significantly with the development of "deviancy theory" and "definition of the situation" concepts that made evident the social construction of the previously unproblematic concept of the "real." Once such theoretical coziness was undermined by the recognition that consensus was not natural but constructed, media theorists in North America turned towards understanding the ways in which the "real" is constructed. Such differences in theoretical emphasis between cultural studies in the UK and cultural studies in the US are still evident in the present formulations of cultural studies. Much has been made of the ways in which US-derived cultural studies has taken a textualist and institutionalised turn that negates the study of political economy and the concrete. However, it is also interesting to note the way in which a stress on the textual aligns more easily with the dominance of the individual within US social formations. In analysing this easy acceptance of cultural studies in the US, Stratton and Ang postulate that, the growth of:

> . . . cultural studies in the United States coincided with the historical loss

> of the ability of that country to control the global economy and the increasing recognition that it can no longer dictate their terms of the "new world order," which to a certain extent has sustained the cohesion of American national identity. This loss . . . opened up a space for divisions within American society to express themselves in a more antagonistic way than the ideology of pluralism had enabled. (Stratton & Ang, 1997, p. 376)

In Canada during the 1960's and '70's, the foremost theorists of communications and its social effects on thought and social behaviour were Marshall McLuhan and Harold Innis. McLuhan, educated at Cambridge, was initially influenced by British strains of Leavisite critique of mass culture as well as media effects theory. His research on the "decentralizing," "integrating," and "accelerating" character of electronic media resulted in a linking between perception of reality and the structure of information. This understanding consequently became popularised in the saying that "the medium is the message" (e.g., that the medium of television itself is what determines the effect on behaviour). Accepted as a glib message, Raymond William's (1974) response to the latter was that:

> . . . if the medium–whether print or television–is the cause, all other causes, all that men ordinarily see as history, are at once reduced to effects. Similarly, what are elsewhere seen as effects, and as such subject to the social, cultural, psychological and moral questioning, are excluded as irrelevant by comparison with the direct physiological and therefor "psychic" effects of the media as such. (p. 127)

For Williams, McLuhan's analysis fails to account for the historical development of the medium, since invention by itself does not bring about cultural change. However, social theorist John Thompson argues that Innis and Mcluhan's work, while open to critique on some fronts, does offer the insight that social relations are changed by the nature of media production. As further critique, Hall (1997) argues that McLuhan, who was educated at Cambridge and influenced by Leavis, changed his initial critique of new technologies as developed in his book, *The Mechanical Bride*, towards one of celebration. Hall levels the charge that "he took a very different position, just lying back and letting the media roll over him; he celebrated the very things he had most bitterly attacked" (p. 132). Despite such criticism, others view the work of McLuhan as groundbreaking, leaving media studies with such phrases as "global village"–strangely apt in the age of the internet.

Innis's work on space-time distanciation proved usef[illegible]n recent theorisation, especially Giddens', on the effects of the break [illegible]ime and space caused by media technology. According to Thompson (1990), Innis' concept allows for recognition that:

> The transmission of a symbolic form necessarily involves the detachment, to some extent, of this form from the original context of it's production; it is distanced from this context, both spatially and temporally, and inserted into new contexts which are located at different times and places. (p. 13)

Ideology

James Carey (1989) declares that "British cultural studies could be described just as easily and perhaps more accurately as ideological studies, for they assimilate, in a variety of complex ways, culture to ideology" (p. 97). Within the early years of cultural studies' development at the CCCS, understandings and analysis of ideology were based on an Althusserian conception, where ideology enabled the emergence of certain subject positions. Such conception of ideology as a framework "provides people with common sense sets of beliefs and ways of viewing the world and their position in society which justify their subordination by making it appear natural and inevitable. It expresses an imaginary relation between people and their real conditions of existence." As Turner (1992) argues, such an Althusserian drift of early cultural studies would reduce the individual subject to the status of mere personification of a given structure, spoken by the discourses which cross the space of his subjectivity (p. 210). Sparks (1996) points out that Althusser's treatment of ideology has two important features: that ideology is always embedded in "ideological state apparatuses" and that ideology is fundamentally an unconscious operation (p. 87). However, critical cultural studies found Althusserian conceptions of ideology too deterministic and without any subject who might initiate a Marxian revolution. Thus, when English translations of Gramsci's work started to emerge in Britain, critical cultural studies adopted and posited the concept of hegemony as a binary opposite to Althusserian models of ideology. However, Turner (1990) argues, "within such accounts, the similarities between Althusser and Gramsci are glossed over, and the differences are exaggerated to legitimate the adaptation of Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a necessary correction to Althusserianism" (p. 198). For my study, the issue of ideology is highlighted during the process of interpretation and re-interpretation of the students' reception of the various media texts: are they the victims of ideology or are they agents, who are using media for their own specific ends? Are they regulated or self-regulated in their consumption of media culture?

Stuart Hall's (1982) "Rediscovery of 'Ideology': The Return of the 'Repressed' in Media Studies" was a seminal article in these debates concerning ideology and its place in critical cultural studies, and he outlines three paradigm shifts in media research from the 1920s to the 1980s. For him, these shifts are marked not only by the research methods or procedures but also in terms of theoretical and political orientations. For Hall (1982), it is ideology that makes the difference in terms of differentiating these paradigms: "the simplest way to characterise the shift from mainstream to critical perspectives is in terms of movement from, essentially, a behavioural to an ideological perspective" (p. 56). Turner, in analysing Hall's article, argues that while in the behaviourist perspective ideology was "repressed," in the critical it was recovered as the central category that connected media to society. In continuing the argument further, he identifies media as the key mechanism for centralizing cultural power, which is achieved on two fronts via cultural reception and the articulation of ideology into social formation. Important as well is the politics of signification, whereby the reality effect is produced as naturalised and common sense.

With the reformulation of ideology away from a direct association with "false consciousness," cultural studies has had to find a means of defining ideology without positing it as automatic transfer of specific beliefs. Chris Baker (1999), in offering one way out of the impasse, argues that:

> ideologies as a form of power/knowledge are structures of signification, which constitute social formation in ways that are thoroughly saturated by power. If meaning is . . . a matter of difference and deferral, then ideology can be understood as the attempt to fix meanings for particular purposes. (p. 108)

Thus, in terms of my study, ideology can be seen to operate through social categories such as race, class, and religion in an attempt to fix specific meanings that emerge from media texts. Using John Thompson's (1990) orientation to ideology, I try to adopt a position whereby:

> the interpretation of ideology is an interpretation of symbolic forms which seek to illuminate the interrelations of meaning and power, which seek to show how, in specific circumstances, the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves to nourish and sustain the possession and exercise of power. (p. 7)

The re-evaluation of the concept of ideology in theorising the link between reception and production of mass culture can be attributed, in part, to Foucault's groundbreaking work on power. At the heart of the discussion of Foucault, analysis of power as operating via capillaries of power revoked the traditional binarism of power as sovereign, coming from above, and as negative, and oppressive. Instead he theorised power not as an object to be possessed as sovereign but rather as productive, producing social effects. In relation to ideology, Gordon (1980) argues that Foucault's theorization suggests domination works not so much through "ideological mystification" as through its ability to define a certain field of empirical truth" (p. 237). In continuing this train of thought, Gordon postulates that:

> It is these features of Foucault's genealogy which make it into the opposite of a critique of ideology that give point to his insistence on the *positive*, *productive* characteristics of modern apparatuses of power and his contention that their effectivity rests on the installation of what he calls a politics or a regime of truth – as opposed to a reign of falsity (p.131ff). (p. 237)

Now while this re-formulation of power is useful and allows us to move away from rigid binarism between agency and structure, nonetheless it seems to subsume questions of structure. Kellner's (1995) formulation argues that:

> While post-structuralist perspectives on power, such as Foucault's own, can contribute to a more sophisticated social theory and cultural studies, simply throwing out structural analysis and ideology critique undermines the project of cultural studies which should draw on structuralist *and* post-structuralist theory, ideology critique *and* analysis of the institutions and practices of power and domination. (p. 90)

Such neo-Marxist advocacy of the need to retain ideology within cultural studies' analytic framework can become problematic, and as such, Doug Kellner (1995) argues for the term to be delimited and used for specific forms of domination. Thus he advocates for parameters to be set as to its usage rather than wholesale application, to all situations where ideology might be evident. In identifying the specifics of such a delimitation he argues that there is a:

> . . . need to link the concept of ideology with theories of hegemony and domination, and thus delimit its application to ideas and positions which serve functions of legitimation, mystification, and class domination that assure the domination of the ruling class, gender and race over other classes and groups within society rather than equating *all* ideas or political positions with ideology. (p. 89)

In a similar vein to Kellner, Henry Giroux (1989) urges caution in abandoning the concept of ideology in the analysis of media culture. For him, "an over reliance on ideology critique limits our ability to understand how people actively participate in the dominant culture through processes of accommodation, negotiation, and even resistance" (p. 17).

Although the focus of my study is the reception of media culture by an audience, namely black students, such an emphasis is problematic because, as semioticians and poststructualists reveal, the reception of text is polysemic and cannot be fully fixed or determined beforehand. Thus, as researchers, note needs to be taken of social theorist Paul Smith's (1988) insight that:

> . . . a cinematic and literary text is never addressed at a reader it knows and thus can never articulate itself with its readers in a predictable fashion. It can, of course, offer preferred positions, but these are by no means the conditions with which a reader must comply if he /she wishes to read a specific text. That is because what always stands between the text's potential or preferred reading effect and an actualized effect is a reader who has a history of his/her own. (p. 34)

In the context of this study, the texts under analysis are those representations of blackness that are produced in the US and consumed in Canada. As such, the students are the audience and the texts are the televisual, aural, and print images produced in the US that are received and consumed by black youths in Canada. Such images offer the audience of students the opportunity to review and pursue a variety of differing subjectivities in general and black subjectivities more specifically. In terms of theoretical analysis, much of this area of this work falls under the descriptor "audience reception theory." Such theories within cultural studies have at the heart of them the postulation that the audience receives the media in a variety of ways, that the audience, unlike those conceptualised by Adorno and the early critical cultural theorists, is an active one. Influences of hermeneutics and literary theories have helped to undermine the acceptance of one reading of the text. For structuralists the meaning within a text lies behind the text via semiotic analysis, while for poststructuralists the meaning is never final, but always deferred, to some extent, illustrating how the text is polysemic with meaning emerging from the process of interaction. Empirically, three pieces of research have contributed to a move away from conceptions of the audience as passive recipients of a dominant ideology, towards a development of the active audience thesis. At the forefront has been Hall's (1980) "Encoding and Decoding" article 1980; Morley's (1980) work on the "*Nationwide*" *Audience*, and Ien Ang (1985) research on *Dallas*. Hall's article draws on Parkin's[4] designation of meaning systems in western democracies in order to identify three types of reading that are possible of television texts. Hall superimposed a designation based on television audiences via his postulation that the dominant system produces three equivalent codes for decoding of the text–the dominant hegemonic, the negotiated, and the oppositional code. Such a reading of the situation is an indicator of Hall's turn towards semiotic/structuralist orientation in his left-Leavisism. He breaks with the American communications model and with the notion of the audience as passive to incorporate a new theory of cultural production and reception. His argument is that production and reception of messages are not of the same process and that:

> . . . just because a message has been sent there is no guarantee that it will arrive; every moment in the process of communication, from the original composition of the message (encoding) to the point at which it is read and understood (decoding) has its own determinants and "condition of existence. (Hall, 1980)

Morley's research, based on Hall's encoding/decoding model, draws conclusions that support the idea of multiple readings that cluster around decoding positions constituted by class. Although his conclusions were later critiqued both by himself in *Family Television* (1986) and others, at the time the research indicated that "the meaning of the text will be constructed differently according to the discourses (knowledge, prejudices, resistances etc.) brought to bear upon the text by the reader and the crucial factor in the encounter of audience/subject and text will be the range of discourses at the disposal of the audience."

In contrast to the latter, Ang's work tackles the often-derided world of soap operas—defined as women's genre. For Ang, the responses to her research are coded around the degree of realism attached to the text. Thus, emotional realism is favoured by Ang and is seen as operating on two levels. The first level is denotation—the literal content of the program, general storyline, (i.e. those who dislike the program locate the program negatively as an example of mass culture). The second level is related to connotation—the associations and implications that resonate from the story line and character interactions. In analysing her respondents' responses and relating them to these two levels, Ang argues that those who find *Dallas* realistic shift the focus of attention from the particularity at the (denotative) narrative to the generality of its (connotative) themes. As well, she identifies what she describes as melodramatic imagination; the articulation of a way of seeing beyond the grand human suffering of classical tragedy to ordinary day-to-day existence, with its own pain and triumphs, its own victories and defeats. The melodramatic imagination activates what is perceived in the text as tragic structure of feeling, which in turn produces the pleasure of emotionalism (Storey, 1993, pp. 139-146). In relation to subject positions she reinforces the idea that texts offer differing subject positions to which one can become subjected. Ang suggests three possible reading positions of *Dallas* separated by "the ideology of mass culture" –an understanding that popular culture is the product of capitalist market and is therefore subject to the laws of capitalist commodity economy. This "ideology of mass culture" is thus a discourse through which fans, ironical viewers, and those who strongly dislike the program are produced. For "ironical viewers" Dallas is transformed from a seriously intended melodrama to the reverse: a comedy to be laughed at–"pleasure without guilt"–whereas to be a fan, to like the program without irony is to be positioned as duped.

Class, gender and racialization influence such polysemic interpretations of texts. Within feminist film theory, Laura Mulvey's (1975) work was instrumental in developing the concept of the male gaze, and the ability of film text to interpellate the viewer into specific subject positions. However, Mulvey's work has been criticised by Manthia Diawara with regard to the place of the black viewer in this process of interpellation, or "hailing" of the black viewer. Julien and Mercer (1996), in acknowledging Diawara's criticism as to the place of the black spectator in the ideological machinery of interpellation, argue that the assumption of a uniform regression in the movie theatre is flawed. Although the spectator is gendered, race as a category is also of importance. Instead, Diawara (1996) suggests that in the process of viewing, moments of rupture occur during which the spectator retrieves his or her identities away from the film and uses gender, race, or sexuality as elements for articulating resistance to the film's discourse (p. 294).

While the traditional conception of ideology as "false consciousness" and the thesis of a dominant group as determining this ideology has been on the wane within cultural studies, it has also created a flexible "open" reading of the relation between text and reader. An offshoot of this adoption of hegemony as a concept of resistance and promotion of the thesis of an "active audience" has been a move towards the problematic development of what theorists such as Jim McGuigan (1997) identify as cultural "populism." Such a position identified in with cultural studies in the US and the theorisation of John Fiske in particular has brought critiques from political economists and neo-Marxists. In critiquing this turn towards textuality and populism, Janet Wolff (1993) argues that:

> . . . expansion of cultural studies, especially in the United States, is to some extent based on this textualising shift, whose consequences are both a depoliticisation of the original project of cultural studies, and the transformation of what should be sociological critical study into a new hermeneutic. (p. 149)

Such forms of cultural populism have undertaken a re-valuation of the subordinate term "consumption," resulting in a more textualist turn that rejects the "material conditions of cultural production for a form of cultural populism." Fiske (1988) defends the usefulness of his position by claiming that "we have for too long simplistically equated power with social determination and have neglected to explore how resistant, evasive, scandalising bottom-up power actually operates" (p. 249). Turner argues that Fiske's position is also supported by "two major competing theoretical issues of the late 1980s," namely the "role of pleasure, and the postmodernist postulation of the sliding signifier" (p. 218). In continuing this critique of cultural populism, McGuigan goes on to argue that not only is the consumption model not concerned with the material, but the model fits with the early twenty-first century right-wing political economic model/ideology of "consumer sovereignty" (p. 139).

Chapter Summary

In this first section of mapping the terrain, I have identified the historical development of cultural studies while alluding to the tensions surrounding the use and developments of concepts such as culture, hegemony, and ideology within differing national formations. The literature highlights the tension between "culturalism" and "structuralism," between structure and agency. Also notable within these early formulations of cultural studies is how class is privileged as a point of analysis while other social categories such as gender, race, and ethnicity are regarded as epiphenomenal.

In chapter two I focus on the development of Black Cultural Studies and its theorisation of the concepts of race, representation, and black identity through a cultural politics framework. A focus on these concepts enables me to think of black identity as having a sense of continuity while also recognising that intra-group differences are produced through the social categories of class, religion, ethnicity, nationality, gender, and sexuality.

Notes

---

[1] The Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies was formed under the leadership of Richard Hoggart in 1964, his leadership was followed in 1968 by Stuart Hall, who steered the work of the centre in to a more neo-Gramscian orientation that is more recognisable today as cultural studies. For an analysis of the Centre and its theoretical endeavours please see D. Morley & K-H Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* London, UK: Routledge.

[2] Although the work of Adorno and Horkheimer are often presented as representing the viewpoint of the School, other theorists of the Frankfurt School such as Walter Benjamin, at times, give a less negative implication to mass consumption. In particular refer to Benjamin's (1936/73) article in Illuminations "the work of art in the age of mechanical production.

[3] A diasporan African born in Trinidad. *The Times Educational Supplement* argued that "CLR James has a special place in the history of the Third World revolutionary movements…he combines Caribbean nationalism, Black radicalism, a once Trotskyist blend of revolutionary anti-imperialism, and the European classic tradition and potent mix… a mine of richness and variety" (jacket cover *Spheres of Existence* 1980). CLR's most well-known book is *The Black Jacobins* (1938).

[4] Parkin's initial formulation identified three meaning systems in Western industrial democracies
(i) Dominant system –endorses the current structure of social, economic and political relations and enables people to understand their social location within the existing distribution of power, wealth and jobs. Produces in subordinate class
a) *deferential* –those who accept or b) *aspirational* –seek to improve.
(ii) Subordinate
(iii) Radical –rejects the dominant system and proposes an alternative one opposed to it. It produces oppositional responses (John Fiske, p.175).

Chapter 2

Mapping the Terrain of Literature II: Theorising Blackness

Introduction

Having outlined the main concepts/tensions within cultural studies in the previous chapter, in this chapter I will examine, more specifically, cultural studies orientation to issues of blackness. The variant of cultural studies that is highlighted draws on the work of scholars who might be identified in general with British cultural studies and, more specifically, with black cultural studies. In aligning myself with the British wing of cultural studies, recognition is given to the theoretical distinctions between, and emphases within, the variants of cultural studies. In particular, I highlight Iona Davies' assertion that:

> the way in which cultural studies as a Thing has been co-opted in the United States raises quite a different issue from those in the UK ... taken everywhere as an academic development, rather than a political or educational one, forgetting that many of the debates in Britain took place in the pages of *New Left Review, Marxism Today,* and a host of non-academic magazines and journals. (1995, p .158)

As well, the multi-disciplinary framework of cultural studies is useful, since the study deals with the complexity of the experiences of high school students whose lives (like most of ours) do not follow the logic and coherence of an abstract theoretical model. This latter acknowledgement of the changing rather than static nature of lived experiences also gestures to poststructuralist literature in terms of its ability to recognise change and, at times, fragmentation within identity formation while also trying to deal with situations where continuity seems to be more evident. In this chapter, five main areas are explored through the critical cultural studies literature and its theorisation of blackness. The main areas are, Black cultural studies, race/racialization, representation, black identity and hybridisation. These specific areas have been chosen because they allow me to look at the ways in which blackness gets represented through racialization and enables recognition of the fluidity of identity through hybridisation. Theoretically, this newer formulation of critical cultural studies that moves beyond just a class analysis offers a framework for investigating the complex way racialized/political identities such as "black" overlap and intertwine with gender, class, ethnicity, power, and popular culture to give meaning to social divisions and everyday life (Hartley, 1994, p.71).

Of significance to my study, cultural studies has spawned its own subcategory, namely Black Cultural Studies. Within this subcategory, theorists such as Stuart Hall, Kobena Mercer, Isaac Julien, Paul Gilroy, Hazel Carby, Houston Baker Jr., and Manthia Diawara have produced work that extends the analytic boundaries of Cultural Studies into areas that provoke questions concerning identity, race, nation, and gender. Diawara's website argues that his theoretical formulations regarding:

> . . . blackness put him squarely in the field of the "strategic essentialists" (to borrow a phrase from Gayatri Spivak). Thinkers from this school (who include Arthur Jafa, Greg Tate, Tricia Rose and others) are concerned with privileging Blackness in all its forms and doing away with reductive, monolithic conceptions of Black culture. Diawara's thinking in this area relates strongly to the work of Paul Gilroy and Houston A. Baker, Jr. who are concerned with Black modernities. The "strategic essentialist" position retains a strong interest in the hidden histories and continuities in Black cultural production without recourse to narrower, pathological and biological notions of cultural purity. (Haslett, 1998)

In some ways this extension of the areas of analytic concern within cultural studies was almost inevitable. Theorists attempted to analyse the cultural formations that developed in relation to movements of populations across and between state boundaries, between margin and periphery. *The Empire Strikes Back* (CCCS, 1982) was an influential book that helped to "effect a paradigm shift from race-relations sociology to cultural studies. In so doing the book helped to displace the theory/practice dichotomy, thus resulting in debates on issues such as police accountability, and multicultural education (Mercer, 1994, p. 13). Further, Gilroy (1995) argues that:

> . . . black popular culture does not determine the formation of social and cultural identities in any mechanistic way, but it supplies a variety of symbolic, linguistic, textual, gestural, and, above all, musical resources that are used by people to shape their identities, truths, and models of community. (p. 25)

An interesting collection that represents the formation of such a site of knowledge is an edited collection by Houston Baker Jr., Manthia Diawara, and Ruth Lindeborg (1996) entitled *Black British Cultural Studies*. In introducing this collection, the authors indicate that the collection does not "attempt to challenge any one camp's reigning notions of how cultural studies has developed or should develop in the United Kingdom, or any where else." They add, "Nor does the collection pose as the announcement of a new intellectual paradigm" (p. 1). Instead, Houston Jr. indicates that unlike the relations of representation advocacy for Black Studies in the United States, which was linked to the "masses," black

British cultural studies could be identified as more akin to a politics of representation.

The present day mantra of race, class, and gender, the category of youth is also important for the students in this study. Categorisation as "youths," rather than adults, provides an important element in the social matrix, along with race, class, gender, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity through which relations of domination operates. As such, critical cultural studies, with its cross-disciplinary nature, is a prime area within which to study the crossover areas (mediazation, youth culture, and black identity) identified within my thesis. As an area of study, Todd Gitlin (1997) argues that:

> . . . the ascendancy of cultural studies, is mediated by the boom in the scale of popular culture, and its significance in the lives of individuals in Western societies.... With the success of Keynesian policies, high employment, and collective bargaining came a boom in disposable income among the young in more privileged countries. . . . It is not simply that the market in popular culture grew enormously in scale after World War II but that from the 1960s on, the young have come to define themselves by their taste, specially their taste in popular music. (p. 26)

The significance of the latter process for my study is that cultural studies has identified that youths relate not only to the music that they listen to, but relate also through the music in such a way that they develop a sense of cultural membership and orientation to morality. Thus it is that:

> . . . cultural studies has a long-standing tradition of mapping the contours of media culture and the ways in which it educates youth to think, feel, desire, and act. Youth in this perspective is less an element to be controlled than a complex formation to be analysed, interpreted, and engaged within largely representative apparatuses of youth socialisation. (Giroux, 1996, p. 15)

Within the CCCS, Hall and Jefferson's (1976) edited book *Resistance through Rituals* is the first major study of youth cultures and lays the foundation for the recognition of youth as a social category and youth cultures as worthy of study in their own right. The stated object of the text was to explain youth cultures as "a phenomenon, and their appearance in the post war period" (Clarke, Hall et al., 1976, p. 9). The definition of youth cultures used within *Resistance through Rituals* exemplifies the underlying assumptions of my own study. Thus as Clarke, Hall et al., (1976) argue, the term "'youth culture,' directs us to the cultural aspects of youth. We understand the word culture to refer to that level at which social groups develop distinct patterns of life, and give expressive form to their social life and material experience" (p. 10). Unlike the latter authors however, my study does not regard youth cultures as a subculture of a parent culture that is then at the behest of a dominant culture.

Perhaps the most influential theorist in terms of youth cultures to emerge from the critical cultural studies framework has been Dick Hebdige. As a member of the critical cultural studies group at the CCCS in the 1970s, and influenced by Gramsci and semiotics, Hebdige was interested in the ways in which youths contested and resisted societal dominance via their use of popular culture. In his seminal work *Subcultures and the Meaning of Style* (1979), Hebdige highlights the ways in which youths, seen as a threat and problem to the status quo, use style to "convert the threat of being under surveillance into the pleasure of being watched" (Hebdige, 1988, p. 8). Such a link between style and politics highlights the contested and resistance elements within youth cultures: "style was insurgency because it was bricolage, and because bricolage pried symbols away from their original contexts, it was self-defining activity, or 'resistance'" (Gitlin, 1997, p. 28).

Of interest in this area of research is the way that black youth culture starts to make inroads into critical cultural analysis, not in its own right but as a part of an explanatory model for white working class youth disaffection and rebellion. Youth culture texts such as *Resistance Through Rituals* (1976) set the tone for *Policing the Crisis* (1978). This is regarded by Hall (1996) as a decisive and, at times, contentious turn in his and the Centre's theorisation of race. As he recalls, "actually getting cultural studies on its own agenda the critical question of race, the politics of race, the resistance to racism, the critical questions of cultural politics was itself a profound struggle against a resounding but unconscious silence" (p. 270).

In examining some of the articles in *Resistance Through Rituals*, it is noticeable the ways in which black culture, and music in particular, is analysed as a tool of resistance to be used by white working class youths. Thus Hebdige's article "Reggae, Rastas & Rudies" (1976) although dealing with the development of West Indian "reggae" and "ska" in Britain, nonetheless placed working class youths unproblematically as the centre of analysis. In doing so, the article "did not problematise the historical or geo-cultural specificity of that context as compared to other contexts" (Stratton & Ang, 1996, p. 378). By way of further caution, it is also worth nothing that much of the early semiotic-based research on youth cultures tended to focus on specific forms of masculinity and its intersection with class formations. As Iain Chambers concludes in his article "A Strategy for Living" (1976): "embedded in black culture, in black music are oppositional values which in a fresh context served to symbolise and symptomise the contradictions and tensions played out in British working class youth subculture" (p. 166). In line with the latter, Angela McRobbie (1981) argues that Willis' theorisation in

Learning to Labour (1977) glamorises the macho existence of the "lads" while failing to analyse his participants' sexism or the consequent exclusion of gender and ethnicity from the specific class dimensions of his analysis. This focus on males, in particular working class males, may well be contoured by the theoretical search for an obvious agent within research. In such a conceptualisation of research, we sometimes lose sight of the quiet moments where other things are happening. In line with this latter argument, McRobbie (1984) suggests that texts are often neglected when studying youths:

> One of the marked characteristics of most academic writing on youth has been its tendency to conceive of youth almost entirely in terms of action and of direct experience . . . . This has had the effect . . . of neglecting almost totally those many times where they become viewers, readers, part of an audience, or simply silent, caught up in their own daydreams. To ignore these is to miss an absolute central strand in their social and personal experience . . . . [W]e are left with little knowledge of any of their viewing experiences and, therefore, how they find themselves represented in these texts, and how in turn they appropriate from these and discard others. (p. 141)

As well, critical cultural theorists are aware not just of consumption of ideology but also the ways in which popular culture has become a resource that plays out in social relations and relations of domination. Recognition of popular culture as a resource can be seen in John Thompson's (1990) comment that:

> . . . in the light of receiving media messages and seeking to understand them, of relating them and sharing them with others, individuals remould the boundaries of experience and reuse their understandings of the world and themselves. They are not passively absorbing what is presented to them, but are actively, sometimes critically, engaged in a continuing process of self-formation and self-understanding, a process of which the reception and appropriation of media messages is today an integral part. (p. 10).

Formation of cultural identities through popular culture has also been identified within the cultural studies literature as an area of importance. As Henry Giroux (1996) argues, "the self and social formation of diverse youth subcultures mediated by popular cultural forms such as television, advertising, pulp fiction, rock music, rap, and films remain a prominent concern of cultural studies" (p. 15). Giroux (1996) attributes cultural studies' reluctance to isolate the study of schooling from youth culture as a contributory factor in its openness "to the theoretical possibilities for understanding education as a political, pedagogical practice that unfolds in a wide range of shifting and overlapping sites of learning" (p. 15).

Race/Racialization Race

The concept of race as a biological entity has been badly shaken by the critique of anthropologists and sociologists alike (Banton, 1967; 77). For these theorists, race no longer has a biological significance, since geographic mobility and intermarriage have undermined the theory of "races" as distinct and separate groups. Instead there is recognition among social theorists that:

> . . . race is, first and foremost, an unequal relationship between social aggregates, characterised by dominant and subordinate forms of social interaction and reinforced by the intricate patterns of public discourse, power, ownership and privilege within the economic, social and political institutions of society. (Marable, 1995, p. 364)

Within the critical cultural studies, literature race has become accepted as a social construction and formation rather than a physical reality. At the forefront of this theorisation of race as a social formation are US theorists such as Omi and Winant, for Winant (1994):

> Race is a means of knowing and organising the social world; it is subject to continual contestation and reinterpretation, but is no more likely to disappear than other forms of human inequality and difference. . . . As Du Bois knew it, [race] is also a history of hybridity, of multiplicity, of reciprocity, and, ultimately, of the struggle for democracy. To rethink race is not only to recognise its permanence, but also to understand the essential test it poses for any diverse society seeking to achieve a modicum of freedom. (p.xii-xiii)

In a similar vein to Winant, McCarthy and Crichlow (1993) are also cautious with regard to the assumed unity of peoples of the continent and peoples of the African diaspora. For them:

> . . . racial difference is the product of human interests, needs, desires, strategies, capacities, forms of organization and mobilization. And that these dynamic variables which articulate themselves in the form of grounded social constructs, such as identity, inequality, and so forth, are subjects to change, contradiction, variability, and revision within historically specific and determinate contexts. (p. xv)

The word race is problematic because its usage can imply race as an objective element. Much of the liberal and radical theorising around race, though "committed to a social rather than biological interpretation of race, nevertheless slips into a kind of objectivism about racial identity and racial meaning" (Omi &

Winant, 1993, p. 6). It is often treated as an independent variable. Contemporary racial theory, then, is often objectivist about its fundamental category. Although abstractly acknowledged to be a socio-historical construct, race in practice is often treated as an objective fact; one simply is one's race. Objectivist treatments lacking a critique of the constructed character of racial meanings, also clash with experiential dimensions of the issue, if one doesn't act "Black" "White" etc, that's just deviance from the norm. Criticism of this objectivist perspective argues that it cannot grasp the process oriented and relational character of racial identity and racial meaning. Further, the objectivist perspective denies the historicity and social comprehensiveness of the race concept; it cannot account for the way actors both individual and collective, have to manage incoherent and conflictual racial meanings and identities in everyday life (Omi & Winant, 1993). In other words, it has no concept of racial formation.

Within sociological literature race is also purported to be an ideological construct. As an ideological construct it can be understood in the Marxian sense of false consciousness that explains other material conditions. Barbara Fields (1990) argues that race as a concept was founded on an ideological need for a means of justifying slavery to people whose terrain was a republic founded on radical doctrines of liberty and natural rights. Robert Miles would agree with Fields that "race" serves no real analytic purpose since it is an ideological construction. He further suggests that this "process of attributing meaning results in the reification of real social relations into ideological categories and leads to a commonsense acceptance that race is an objective determinant." As such, Miles adopts a perspective which substitutes the term "race" for "racialisation," a concept that is able to incorporate the dimension of race as social construct. Thus he views "racialisation" or "racial categorisation" as a process of construction which attributes meanings to certain patterns of physical variation (Miles, 1982, pp. 153-67).

However, Gilroy (1987) critiques Miles' formulation for concentrating purely on class formations and for ignoring the possibility that racial subordination can act as a unifying force allowing groups to act across class lines. He therefore would support the retention of "race" for analytic purposes; he argues that cultural forms have more weight than Miles allows and that:

> . . . "race" is a historically conditioned "relation" capable of grouping various themes across varying social formations. Race must be retained as an analytic category, not because it corresponds to any biological or epistemological absolutes, but because it refers investigation to the power that collective identities acquire by means of the roots in tradition. (p. 5)

The latter conceptualisation of race is important within the context of my study in that it offers a way to retain the use of race as an analytic concept. While it would be heartening if we could do without the word race, it is useful to recognise that symbolically the word still carries meanings in terms of social classification.

As indicated above, much of the early critical cultural studies work was class based and, as such, negated the intersections of class with race and ethnicity and gender. In particular, Paul Gilroy has been at the forefront of excavating the links between sources of cultural studies and European forms of racism. As Gilroy argues in his book *Black Atlantic* (1993):

> It is certainly the case that ideas about "race," ethnicity, and nationality form an important seam of continuity linking cultural studies with one of its sources of inspiration—the doctrines of modern European aesthetics that are consistently configured by the appeal to national and often racial particularity. (p. 8)

The theoretical perspective adopted by critical cultural studies on both sides of the Atlantic is one that highlights race as closely aligned with a process of politics. This process of politics means that the race as analysed has become linked with concepts of nationality and ethnicity in the UK, and with issues of crime.

Among the early texts in critical cultural studies to highlight the politics of race is CCCS's *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982) and Paul Gilroy's (1987) *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*. Both books made race and racism the centre of analysis and reflected a move away from the class-based analysis identified with the CCCS. The book offers an analysis that links issues of exclusion to ethnicity, and nationalism. Also under scrutiny by black British cultural studies is the naturalised link between ethnicity, imperialism, nationalism, racism and the state. Both Gilroy, and Hall attested to the contested nature of ethnicity, but whereas Gilroy argues for caution in its use, Hall (1989) indicates that it is a useful term and should be reformulated to serve as an inclusive category for "new identities."

Representation

Within the critical cultural studies literature, the issue of race as a social construction is closely aligned with the discussions. Representation can be linked to meaning and language, the way that various symbols are used to convey meanings. For Hall (1997) this is called culture–the shared conceptual maps, shared language systems, and the codes that govern the relationships of translation between them. Thus, meaning is constructed by the system of representation. It is constructed and fixed, momentarily, by a code, which sets up the correlation between our conceptual system and our language system in such a way that codes fix the relationship between concept and sign. Codes stabilise meaning. If we agree that meaning is not something that is fixed, then logically we come to a position that allows words to carry somewhat different meanings. Meaning is perceived as not inherent in things and the world out there.

At times representation works by what is not shown as much as by what is shown. We share conceptual maps, and have access to a system of representation via language in order to construct meaning. "The general term we use for words, sounds or images which carry meaning is signs. These signs stand for or represent the concepts and the conceptual relations between them which we carry around in our heads" (Hall, 1997, p. 61). Stuart Hall's (1997) discussion of representation is useful in terms of applying the concept to my study. He suggests that there are three main approaches to explaining how meaning gets translated through language. First is the reflective approach whereby meaning is thought to reside in the object, person, idea, or event, and language works like a mirror to reflect true meaning. Second, the intentional approach argues that it is the speaker or author who imposes meaning on the world, and third, the constructivist acknowledges that neither approach in itself nor the individual users of language fix meaning within language. Within my study, the analysis is aligned more with the constructivist perspective than the reflective or the intentional approaches. In the latter perspective, representation involves making meaning by forging links between three different orders of things. These three different orders involve what we broadly call the world of things, people, events and experiences: the conceptual world – the mental concepts we carry around in our heads; and the signs, arranged into languages, which "stand for" or communicate these concepts (p. 61). It is also worth noting the social world does not exist *a priori* of discourses of representation. It can be argued that "what is out there is in part constituted by how it is represented" (Hall cited in Storey 1996).

In linking youth culture to representation of blackness, the critical cultural studies literature has focussed on the political significance of how blacks are represented primarily in film and TV, news media and rap music. Popular culture is now a major site of social, political, and moral discourse and debate. The construction of youth as a threat is often most acute for youths of African descent, especially in some cities in Europe and North America. Mercer (1994) argues that:

> . . . the prevailing stereotype (in contemporary Britain) projects an image of black youth as mugger or rioter. . . . But this regime of representation is reproduced and maintained in hegemony because black men have had to resort to toughness as a defensive response to the prior aggression and violence that characterises the ways black communities are policed . . . . This cycle between reality and representation makes the ideological fictions

> of racism empirically true, or rather, there is a struggle over the definition, understanding and construction of meanings around black masculinity within the dominant regime.
> (pp. 137-8)

The media, in the form of television, print, and music, is very much part of those practices. For Henry Giroux (1993), the media shapes identity because we "inhabit a photographic aural and televisual culture in which the proliferation of photographic and electronically produced images and sounds serves to actively produce knowledge and identities within particular sets of ideological and social practices" (p. 19). Gray (1993) indicates that in some of the most notable US:

> . . . television shows, music videos and films, the construction of blackness and community is mobilised through various emblems of the imagined black nation, a mythic African past, and heroic black masculinity. These are expressed in the dress, hairstyles, language, bodies of young black (mostly) males who wear, speak and look the part of "real brother." From *Do the Right Thing* to *Boyz N the Hood*. (p. 368)

Though young directors Spike Lee and John Singleton would prefer to see themselves as having moved towards a stance which is "rebellious, sociologically important, entrenched in the Black psyche" (George, 1992, p. 5), these films have been criticised as portraying masculinist and nationalist representations (hooks, 1992; George, 1992; Gray, 1993).

Much of the literature indicates that rap music plays a part in evoking certain images of young black men via the ways in which they are represented. Julia Koza (1994) outlines succinctly the role the print media plays in the representation of young black men as alien threat. It is not just music that plays a role in creating images of young black men; news commentaries are also implicated. Deborah Britzman's (1991) work on the news commen-taries demonstrates such a connection and goes on to further illustrate that: commentaries are overdetermined by forms of racism and sexism that contradictorily work to racialise and unracialise and genderise and ungenderise (p. 93). The result of such a discourse is that blacks are never victims, white men are never raced, black masculinity is always crimin-alized, white women are perpetually victimised, and black women are irrelevant. Yet it is this discourse that dominates contemporary racist and sexist narratives in ways that essentialise the meaning of identity, difference, and otherness. Within this study, importance is given to the students' reception and perception of representations of blackness that emanates from the US-based media. This understanding of representation recognises that "representational systems consist of the actual sounds we make with our vocal chords, the images we make on light-sensitive paper with cameras, the marks we

make with paint on canvas, the digital impulses we transmit electronically" (Hall, 1997, pp.
24-5). Thus the television programs that the students watch and the magazines that they read can be viewed as representational systems, as part of the way that media attempts to convey meaning.

Black Identity

Over the past thirty years a shift has occurred in the theorisation of social, cultural and national identities in North America and Europe whereby the conceptions of the self have been theoretically decentred. Although the post-1968 era in Europe can be seen as a contributor to a more flexible theorisation of identity, subjectivity, and ideology, Stuart Hall also attributes the changes in identity theorisation to an earlier period under the influence of theorists such as Marx, Freud, Saussere and Nietzsche. These theorists postulated that the unconscious plays a more important role in the formation of individual identity than the Cartesian formulation allowed. Jacques Lacan, Julia Kristeva, Homi Bhabha, bell hooks and Stuart Hall have been prominent among the more recent social theorists to directly challenge the concept of a fixed idendity. Easthope and McGowan (1992) suggest that for these theorists the:

> . . . concept of subjectivity decentres the individual by problematizing the simplistic relationship between language and the individual . . . . It replaces human nature with concepts of history, society and culture as determining factors in the construction of individual identity, and destabilises that identity by making it an effect rather than simply an origin of linguistic practice. (p. 67)

In general, recent theories of identity formation have tended to focus on the decentred nature of identity. Poststructuralism and postmodernism are part of the forces affecting this shift in the way that identity is viewed. Both these frameworks of thinking support the idea of social entities, such as identity, which were once thought of as fixed should now be recognised as fluid and ambiguous. This critique of stability embraces the assumption that "to act as if the social categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, age and so on are stable and unchanging is to reproduce the prevailing relations of power" (Britzman et al., 1991, p. 89). For such theorists the fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one of which we could adopt–at least temporarily (Hall, 1991, p. 277).

Along with this recognition of fluidity and ambiguity has been a necessary emphasis on the socially-constructed nature of reality. Thus history, time, and location affect conceptualisations of identity. This is very much the case in this study where the influence of US-derived television images is magnified by their proliferation via cable and satellite. Postmodernist theorists would argue that there has been a recent crisis in identity formation in line with wider structural and economic changes in society. The dislocation of the central processes of modern societies has supposedly led to the destabilisation of the frameworks that gave individuals stable anchorage in the world.

Mouffe (1993) postulates that identity cannot belong to one person alone, and no one belongs to a single identity (p. 110). Further, she argues that there will always be the possibility that this "us"/"them" relationship will become one of "friend and enemy" (i.e., one of antagonism). This happens when the "other," who up until now has been considered as simply different, starts to be perceived as someone who is rejecting "my" identity and who is threatening "my" existence. From that moment on, any form of us/them relationship–whether it be religious, ethnic, economic or other–becomes political (Mouffe, 1993, p. 108). In this view, identity cannot be understood without understanding the relationships between individuals and groups.

Jacques Derrida's work on meaning was also important in supporting the shift away from the Cartesian understanding of identity as centred. His challenge to the structuralist view of Saussure and Levi-Strauss argues that meaning is present as a "trace"; it is not fixed in the relationship between signified and signifier. Meaning is produced through process of deferral, which Derrida calls difference. Thus, what appears determinate is fluid and unsure, and there is no point of closure. Derrida's work suggests an alternative to the closure and rigidity of binary oppositions. There is contingency rather than fixity, and meaning is thus able to slide. These critical cultural studies theorists argue that cultural identity is relational, in other words, black is identified by what it is not. Identity is marked out by symbols. Such symbolic elements provide a sense of ethnic belonging based upon aspects such as kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affiliation, nationality, physical features, cultural values, and cultural practices such as art, literature, and music. The symbolic involves how we make sense of social relations and practices by delineating who is included and who is excluded. Thus social differentiation is how these classifications are lived out in social relations as every social practice is marked symbolically.

Although much fuss is made of this recent recognition of the decentred nature of identity, it can be argued that in relation to black identity, the issue of ever having had a stable identity is debatable. The fact of being physically different from the constructed "norm" of dominant white society has resulted in a socialisation process that often entails a consciousness of presence or a sense of awareness of the "other." Because of this constructed awareness of the other in conjunction with the historical relations of dominance that blacks face, it becomes problematic to think of black identity as ever having been centred and one-dimensional. Theoretically, this analysis draws upon American theorist W. E. B. Du Bois (1969) who, in speaking of diasporic Africans in the United States, identifies what he terms a state of *"double consciousness"* whereby:

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil and gifted with second-sight in this American world–a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . . (p. 45)

The implication of Du Bois' analysis is that within a politically and economically- dominant white society, such as the United States, black identity is less unified and static. In order to survive in a socially white society, black identity has to be decentred.

With regard to the specific theorisation of black identity within critical cultural studies, the work of British cultural theorists Hall, Gilroy, Mercer, Brah, and Parmar, as well as North Americans such as Diawara, Houston Baker Jr., Gray and bell hooks have drawn upon psychoanalysis and feminism to re-theorise a conceptual shift in black identity that moves beyond a notion of fixity. So it is that Hall suggests three different conceptualisations of identity in general: those of the Enlightenment subject, the sociological subject, and the postmodern subject. Chris Barker (1999), in building on Hall's work, gives a clear explanation of what these descriptors mean in terms of social relations. Thus, with the Enlightenment subject, conceptions of such a rational self are not just a matter of philosophy but are central to the Western conception of the self as "persons unified and capable of organising themselves." With the sociological subject Barker argues, drawing on Giddens, that this categorisation has two elements to it: self identity and social identity, where both are "understood reflexively by the person in terms of her or his biography" (p. 151). Barker (1999) postulates that the "resources that we are able to bring to an identity project depend on the situational power and specific cultural contexts from which we derive our competencies. That is, it matters whether we are black or white, male or female, African or American, rich or poor, because of the differential cultural resources which have constituted us" (pp. 15-16).

Similarly, Hall (1992) argues that:

> . . . the subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent "self," Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are

> continually being shifted about. If we feel that we have a unified identity from birth to death it is only because we construct a comforting story or "narrative of the self" about ourselves. (p. 277)

Gilroy (1995) uses a similar schema in relation to black identities but with four main elements. Black identity is developed in relation to racial politics, including first, an overintegrated sense of self–identified as a "cleansed" identity. Second is a relational idea of self within which "selfhood is figured through the desire for respect and recognition and confirmed through their bestowal." Third is an "internal differentiation of the modern black subject" expressed through the celebrated idea of "double consciousness that recreated the idea of the inside and outside in the process that produces identity." Finally, a postmodern approach that accentuates the fragmentary nature of identity and sees self and subjectivity as an 20-23).

Underlying conceptions of black identity are perceived collective orientations towards understandings and interpretation of culture. Just as individual identity has been seen as fixed, cultural identity has often been viewed as static and primordial and constructed to some extent though conflict. As such, cultural identity is recognised within critical cultural theory as both the scene and the object of political struggles. Madan Sarup (1994) makes this point when he argues that any minority group faced with hostility does several things. One of these is to draw a boundary around itself in order to form a border to maintain its cultural or religious bond. What develops is a collective identity that can be used as a form of defence against its aggressors. During the 1980s and 1990s the emergence of cultural identities as part of identity politics has been used to "disturb the peace of middle-class America or Middle England" (Barker, 1999, p. 10). Peter McLaren (1993) adds a cautionary note to the assumed permanence of cultural identities and their use as a political weapon. For him:

> . . . identities constructed in the act of solidarity will be provisional, and alliances formed will be contingent on the strategies, negotiations, and translations that occur *in the act of struggle* for both a common ground of alliance-building (rather than a common culture) and a radical and transformative politics." (p. 222)

For example, in Britain during the early 1980s, black identity formation was a construction made out of differences. When peoples of African and Caribbean descent "hailed" or interpellated themselves and each other as black, they invoked a collective identity predicated on political and not biological similarities. Being black was a sign of alliance for those who share a common historical experience of British racism. In Canada, the descriptor "black" includes those with diverse histories of migration from the Caribbean, the United States and the continent of

Africa. In the U.K., Kobena Mercer (1994), Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy all view such a complex political formation of black identity as a process that undermines the essential Black subject. As Hall (1996) argues:

> . . . what is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences, and cultural identities which compose the category "black"; that is, the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. (p. 166)

So it is that any notion of black coexisting in an easy alliance with race begins to fade along with the destabilisation not just of the essential black subject, but also a secure/essential masculine subject.

Further, McLaren's sense of caution as to the provisional use of identity for political ends, and Mercer's example from Britain can be seen in Hall's understandings of culture. Within Hall's (1990) formulation, we can think about cultural identity in at least two different ways. The first:

> In terms of one shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self" hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves," which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us "as one people" with stable unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (p. 223)

The second way of viewing identity reveals the nuances of poststructuralist thinking:

> . . . [and] recognises that as well as the many points of similarity, there are significant differences which constitute "what we really are"; or rather–since history has intervened–what "we have become". Cultural identity in this second sense is a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." It belongs to the future as much as the past. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past they are subject to continuous "play" of history, culture and power. (p. 225)

What Hall is getting at here is that meaning, while constructed through difference, is not fixed, and that history plays an important role in its formation. This sense of fluidity in meaning is akin to Derrida's notion of "difference," whereby meaning is always deferred, never fixed, and therefore open to slippage. Such an understanding of identity as "becoming" rather than "remaining" allows one to acknowledge that identity is not just about being subject of or subjected to a discourse, but that one can also position one's self in relation to differing meanings. Thus, within my study such an understanding of cultural identity enables the problematization of the group of black students as culturally homogenous.

Hall's reference to essentialism alludes to what has become a source of tension among social theorists in Europe and North America. These debates between essentialist and anti-essentialists take different forms. In one form the debate is between biological and social constructionist, in another the debate shifts between those who see identity as fixed and transhistorical and those who see identity as much more fluid and contingent. The work of North American cultural critic bell hooks identifies the necessity and advantages of challenging essentialism within the African American community. For hooks, such a challenge provides the opportunity to undermine racism in the guise of the "authentic black." Further, she sees it as a way of "acknowledging how class mobility has altered collective black experiences as well as enabling us to affirm multiple black identities, varied black experience" (hooks, 1992). Further along the continuum of a critique of essentialism, Herman Gray (1993), while not totally rejecting the need to challenge essentialism, posits an alternative perspective. He indicates that all too often arguments about essentialism are posed around textual representation and that material locations and practices of different sectors of the black community, as well as the cultural desires through which they are constructed, are given little account (p. 367). Gray's work makes the important point that the social location of the theorist will affect the way in which the concept of essentialism is constructed, interrogated and used. He suggests that we should "not simply read on those desires the arrogance and privilege of our own location," and indicates instead how adoption of an anti-essentialist perspective may well be as a result of our social location. As intellectuals, it is often possible for those of us operating in such spaces to experience ourselves and others more fully in terms of the multiple and complex subject positions that characterise our lives (Gray, 1993, p. 370). Perhaps we should leave the last word to Terry Eagleton (1996) who suggests that "there are indeed reductive, falsely eternalising, brutally homogenizing uses of the concept of essence, and they have wrecked especial havoc in the fields of gender and ethnicity." However, in defence of essentialism, Eagleton goes on to add that "if every concept which can be used for radical ends was discarded because it can be deployed against them, the discourse of radicalism would be threadbare indeed" (p. 103).

As Eagleton indicates above, essentialism is seen as a danger not just in terms of cultural categorisations based on "race" but also gender. Although recognition of black feminist consciousness, such as that identified by Collins (1990), and Philomena Essed's (1991) work allows recognition of shared perspectives, it still reveals tensions and contradictions. These became more evident in the late 1980s with the post-structuralist turn towards a decentred subject. While to assert an individual and collective identity has been important and empowering historically, recognition of a common experience has also led to a political stress on "authentic subjective experience" which forecloses alternative conceptions of consciousness. Similarly, standpoint theory has been critiqued as a mechanism for exclusion and domination whereby only the authentic insider can speak of a group's oppression. Further, implicit within conceptions of black feminist consciousness is the assumption that consciousness will be "critical," and lead to action and social transformation. Such a postulation is problematic because not all women who are located similarly in racialized structures will have the same response to those structures. To suggest this would be to conflate thinking with being, forming a functional unity to be uncritically celebrated, and thus drawing accusations of being ahistorical, subscribing to biological essentialism. One way around this impasse and accusation of essentialism has been to view an exclusionary response to domination as "strategic," a term used by Spivak (1993) to enable one to adopt a position of essentialism as a momentary strategy. If individuals use a black identification as the basis for social interaction without allowing for critique and differences within the group, then the identification runs the risk of "becoming traps, as opposed to strategic and necessary positive effects" (p. 3). Angela McRobbie also draws attention to the way that this essentialism has the effect of making it difficult for black feminists to recognise differences within the category black women, since they have been expected to display characteristics that mark them out through homogenised categories of race and gender.

Although the focus of the study is identity formation, it is also about subjectivity. At times subjectivity and identity are used interchangeably. While the two terms overlap in that both include a sense of self and unconscious thoughts that constitute who we are, maintaining a theoretical distinction is analytically useful. Hall (1997) clearly outlines the way in which the two concepts are distinct:

> We experience our subjectivity in a social context where language and culture give meaning to our experience of our selves and where we adopt an identity. Discourses, whatever set of meanings they construct, can only be effective if they recruit subjects. Subjects are thus subjected to the discourse and must themselves take it up as individuals who so position themselves. The positions which we take up and identify with constitute our identities. (p. 39)

Identity provides a way to understand ourselves in the world, and as such, individual subjectivity is as important for the students as their racialized and collective identities. While traditional psychology views identity as located *within*, an individual's subjectivity includes our sense of self. It involves the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions that constitute our sense of "who we are" and the feelings that are brought to different positions within our culture. Subjectivity involves our most personal feelings and thoughts. Yet we experience our subjectivity in a social context where language and culture give meaning to our experience of our selves and where we adopt an identity. Subjectivity is always historically produced in specific discourses and never one single structure. Thus, each social interaction bears the traces of past subject positions. In drawing a distinction between conceptions of the individual and conceptions of the subject, John Fiske (1992) argues that the individual is produced by nature, while the subject is produced by culture. As such, theories of the individual concentrate on differences between people and explain these differences as natural. "Theories of the subject, on the other hand concentrate on people's common experiences as a society as being the most productive way of explaining who (we think) we are . . . . The subject is a social construction not a natural one" (p. 288). Thus to speak of "the decentering of the subject, then, is to focus on systems of ideas as historical practices through which the objects of the world are constructed and become systems of actions" (Popkewitz & Brennan 1998 p. 11). It is to the latter that Foucault refers when he talks of "historicising of the subject" (Foucault, 1980).

Hybridisation

The idea that identity is not from our essential selves, not there at birth but instead derives from a social context implies fluidity and hybridity of identity. This ability to change our identity and to see it as being in relation to other identities is where Homi Bhabha's 'third space" becomes relevant. If we can view our identities as relational, then a process that he identifies as "translation" can take place. Chris Barker argues (after Pieterse, 1995) that hybridisation can be divided into two types: structural hybridisation, and cultural hybridisation. "Structural hybridisation refers to a variety of border zones, while cultural hybridisation distinguishes between cultural responses ranging from assimilation, through forms of separation, to hybrids that stabilise and blur cultural boundaries." While both types of hybridity would indicate a degree of boundary crossing, they do not represent the "erasure of boundaries and we need to be sensitive to both cultural differences and to forms of identification that involve recognition of similarities" (Barker, 1999, p. 70). While hybridity denotes fluidity rather than fixity, Stuart Hall argues that he cannot adopt a totally postmodern referent towards identity. For him, the way in which he is trying to think questions of identity is slightly different from a postmodernist "nomadic":

> I think cultural identity is not fixed; it is always hybrid. But this is precisely

> because it comes out of very specific historical formations, out of very specific histories and cultural repertoires of enunciation, that it can constitute a "positionality," which we call provisional identity. It's not just anything. So each of those identity-stories is inscribed in the positions we take up and identify with, and we have to live this ensemble of identity-positions in all its specificities. (Hall, 1996, p. 502)

One of the most insightful areas of work with regard to hybridity has been Gilroy's theorisation of the concept of diaspora. As a concept, diaspora is seen as a human scattering of peoples from their original site and location. In terms of a general understanding, Gilroy (1997) argues that:

> Slavery, pogroms, indenture, genocide and other unnameable terrors have all figured in the constitutions of diasporas and the reproduction of a *diasporan consciousness,* in which identity is focussed less on equalizing, proto-democratic force of common territory and more on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration defined by a strong sense of the dangers involved in the forgetting the location of origin and the process of dispersal. (p. 318)

Afrocentric theorists such as Molefi view the diaspora as a point of unity: "a panethnic unity of all black people of the diaspora, pointing to the origins of African people in the 'spatial reality of Africa'" (McCarthy, p. 249). In contrast, cultural theorist Paul Gilroy argues that culture, like identity, should be regarded as fluid and not resting essentially within a specific group. Specifically, he undermines the claims of those who would see African-American culture in absolutist ethnic terms. For Gilroy, black American culture is related to a broader grouping of blacks residing geo-spatially in what he terms the Black Atlantic Diaspora. His conception of a transnational formation that links the Caribbean, Africa, Europe, and America is considered a more insightful unit of analysis for the study of black culture. Gilroy draws on historical analysis of the development of the Enlightenment to reinforce his argument that the ship was an important transporter/purveyor of a diasporic black culture across the Atlantic region. At the same time his argument develops the idea that blacks were an integral part of the formation of the European Enlightenment project. Slavery and issues related to freedom and democracy were the foundation to the development of European society.

Gilroy (1997) gestures to the sense of fragmentation that is inherent within the concept of diaspora, viewing it as a space to move the concept from a descriptive level to an analytic level. For him, diaspora "points towards a more worldly sense of culture than the characteristic notions of social, landscape and rootedness" (p. 328). One needs to think of identity formation in terms of "routes" rather than "roots," to rethink black identity as an "outernational project" rather than a singular construct contained by state boundaries. Marie Gillespie (1995), in using Gilroy's conceptualisation of diaspora in her ethnographic work on Punjabi youth in London, argues that a "diasporic perspective acknowledges the ways in which the identities have been and continue to be transformed through relocation, cross-cultural exchange and interaction" (p. 7). Similarly, using diaspora in the context of my research offers the opportunity to re-read the relationship between identity and location, between nationality and geographic origin. It allows for a shift in "attention from notions of geographically-bound contexts that develop in chronological sequences to notions of regions bound by a discursive "field." Further, such a reading allows analysis of the political and the social aspects of identity, as well as the ability to view how representation of sameness and difference become part of meaning-making and everyday culture. Diaspora helps us understand the intersections of ethnicity, class, religion and gender in identity-formation. It also helps us explore to what extent the students have an "over integrated" or "pluralistic" sense of self in relation to their diasporan community. In other words, where and when do they use boundaries of blackness as markers of difference. As well, the concept of diaspora, with its connotation of sameness and differentiation, provides a fundamental theoretical means to grasp the contemporary politics of identity and identification. Leroi Jones/Amiri Baraka called this "a changing same" in his rich discussion of African- American music and its relationship to both selfhood and community (Gilroy, 1995, p. 26). Further, Herman Gray (1995), in supporting Gilroy's conceptualisation of "changing same," argues that this view of:

> . . . blackness as a cultural trope is alert to, but not blinded by, the socially constructed character and context in which different notions of blackness is made meaningful. African American, black Atlantic and African traditions do survive and exist in popular forms and practices through which they are socially organized and made culturally meaningful. But they are not as some neonationalists and Afrocentric advocates would have it, frozen in time in some original form to be preserved and revisited and resurrected as a source of authentic affirmation and guidance. (p. 151)

What Gilroy's concept of the "Black Atlantic" does is to extend an understanding of the African diaspora and reinforce the notion that culture is hybrid rather than absolute, as some Afrocentrics would pose. Such a process of cultural hybridity indicates a complex theoretical position, since it undermines any claim of black American culture as absolute, while also recognising that commonalties were developed historically between Africans of the diaspora. Arguing that the ship was the vehicle of communication among blacks of the Diaspora during the nineteenth century, Gilroy (1993) develops an analysis that "ships were the living means by which the points within that Atlantic world were joined . . . . [T]hey need to be thought of as complex cultural and political units rather than abstract embodiments of the triangular trade (pp. 16-17). Gilroy's work suggests that one should view the formation of culture as rhizomatic (Deluze), "routes" rather than "roots." Such an understanding of culture recognises the various ways in which culture is syncretic rather than absolute.

However, while hybridisation is a useful concept, it should also be recognised that the concept of hybridity is itself problematic. While it fits within a theoretical paradigm that is more tolerant of fluidity than fixity, it also reinforces and implies the meeting of distinct, separate, and homogenous cultures. Thus, within the confines of my study, the students already bring hybrid cultures with them to any situation of social interaction. "The concept of hybridity is acceptable provided that it is recognised as a discursive device, a way of capturing cultural change by way of a strategic cut or temporary stabilisation of cultural categories" (Barker, 1999, p. 71).

Chapter Summary

In concluding, this chapter has highlighted some of the main texts and theorists who have influenced my thinking on the issues of cultural studies and blackness. Throughout the chapter I have indicated how cultural studies has developed within a specific field of study, namely British cultural studies, and consequently how other descriptors such as Black Cultural Studies have emerged as a subcategory within the overall descriptor. In some ways the latter is a social-historical overview of the ways in which cultural studies has oriented itself to the concepts of culture, and blackness. As well, throughout the study I draw on specific concepts discussed in this chapter to problematise my overall research project. For example, in the study I draw on the concept of diaspora–as fragmentation, flexibility and movement–to problematise the concept of collectivity or collective identity and as a useful means of analysing the present day conditions of "late modernity" and pluralistic societies.

Chapter 3

Laying the Research Trail

Human social life may be understood in terms of relations between individuals "moving" in time-space, linking both action and context, and differing contexts, with one another. Contexts form "settings" of action, whose qualities agents routinely draw upon in the course of orienting what they do and what they say to one another. (Giddens & Turner, 1987, p. 215)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research process from conception of the original question of inquiry, through the collection of data, to the birth of the thesis. The discussion emphasises the theoretical, philosophical and ethical issues that arise while undertaking research. As well, by examining the ways in which I carried out the research, this chapter presents a process of "consistency" or what Guba and Lincoln (1981) describe as an *audit trail*. For them, an audit trail requires the investigator/researcher "to describe in detail how data were collected, how categories were derived, and how decisions were made throughout the inquiry" (cited in Merriam, 1988, p. 172). Where necessary, the narratives of the students and reflections from my research journal are drawn on to construct an account of the study that highlights the joys as well as the problems encountered.

Conception of the Research Question

Delimitation of the Study

No study can totally represent the whole of an issue or present an understanding that is fixed once and for all. As such, this study is a reflection of a specific group of African-Canadian students living in Alberta, Canada in 1998. The study cannot be said to represent the way in which all self-identified black students use media to make meaning in their lives. Yet, although the findings are not generalisable across all African-Canadian student populations in Canada, the experiences of the students can theoretically highlight the ways in which identity formation develops in relation to racialisation and media culture to form a complex and shifting web. The recognition of this shifting web of identity can aid in understanding differing social groups such as African Canadians and lead to an understanding that reflects the nuances of the ways in which society operates in relation to its parts.

The terminology used to describe racialised groups is a contested area. This study of African-Canadian students recognises the complexity and multiplicity of the descriptor African-Canadian or black student. Such a descriptor is not simply an identity; the term evokes differing subject positions that are refracted by ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and class. As well, within the school context other student identities emerge and intersect with black to position them as "good student," or "bad student." It is for the latter reason that in presenting data I discuss not just their racialised identities but also slices of their lives that indicate the complexity of the category "African-Canadian youth." Thus it should be remembered that as students, the participants' identities are constructed in relation to various institutional formations that operate to produce certain "social effects" of power. In using the descriptor African Canadian, I draw on the work of George Elliott Clarke (1996), an African-Canadian social critic and writer who argues that the term refers to:

> persons and expressive cultures, located in or derived from Canada, possessing, to some degree, an ancestral connection to sub-Saharan Africa. The phrase encompasses, then, recent immigrants to Canada from the United States, the Caribbean, South-America, and Africa itself, as well as indigenous, African-descended community. (p. 118)

It also needs to be noted that when scholars such as my self refer to groups of black students, we are referring to a "representation," not necessarily a material reality. In using a similar analysis to understand the relationship between feminism and essentialism, Angela McRobbie (1997) argues that:

> when feminists talk about women, this too is a representation. It does not automatically and unproblematically refer to and reflect a pre-existing material reality. Instead, it constructs and gives an identity to a social group who might have been known as ladies, girls, housewives, or mothers. Feminism creates a category of women which does not reflect a pre-existing reality so much as constitute a new reality. (p. 176)

The term non-black deployed throughout the thesis refers to those students who were other than African Canadian. Although I recognise the multiple social location and diversity of students homogenised by this term, it also reinforces the point that the experiences of black students are the focus of the study (Dei et al., 1997).

Early on in this study the decision was made to concentrate on students of African descent. This narrowing of referent has proved both advantageous and problematic. Constructing a specific group based on geo-historical/political and kinship categories has meant that other social groups within the school were not interviewed. This is to some extent problematic because if, as suggested by poststructuralist literature, we form our identity in relation to "others," then the black students identified by this study form their identities not only in relation to media culture but also in relation to fellow students. Although the latter limitation of the study is recognised, nonetheless time constraints caused by institutional deadlines mean that only African-Canadian students are discussed, as opposed to the wide variety of racialised groups who make up the school population. Further, my study, unlike many concerning the educational experiences of African students, does not identify what percentage of students might be failing or succeeding in the education system. While this might appear to undermine this study's direct usefulness to educators, the study does indicate the complexity of students' identity formation in relation to media culture and the ways in which negotiating such complexities can intersect with their academic lives. As well, the study can give teachers an insight into the world in which the students live, and perhaps indicate the ways in which the cultural is important in terms of academic success[1]. This research takes account of Henry Giroux's (1997) critique of "mainstream educators." The basis of his critique is that "wedded to the modernist infatuation with reason . . . [they] have had little to say about the affective investments that mobilise student identities or how the mobilisation of desire and the body is implicated in the pedagogical regulations of schooling" (p. 14). It should also be noted that although media culture is the foci of discussion and music, music magazines, television, and films are highlighted in the interviews, newspaper consumption was not discussed directly nor the social relations of viewing videos at home.

The Research Question – Conception

My orienting question is to understand the variety of ways in which students use media culture to make meaning in their lives and to identify with certain black subject positions. Such forms of "cultural analysis are, first and foremost, the elucidation of . . . patterns of meanings, the interpretative explication of the meanings embodied in symbolic forms" (Thompson, 1990, p. 132). My specific research question thus emerges as: "In what ways do a group of African-Canadian students make use of media culture to give meaning to their sense of identity? In particular, in what ways does U.S. media culture enable or constrain aspects of local black identity formation?

The conceptualisation of my research question was the direct result of a previous project on the perceptions of schooling, peers, and popular culture among high school students in two Edmonton schools (Kelly, 1998). This latter project was exploratory in nature and revealed the importance of media culture in terms of meaning-making within the students' lives. Although the focus of my initial exploratory research was black high school students and perceptions of their high school experiences, the study revealed that the boundaries between the school and the outside world were often blurred. In particular, the world of media culture seemed to offer a point of "border crossing" between school and the "outside" community (Giroux, 1997). Another impetus for the study was that at this specific historical juncture, youth culture is important among school students and paramount within this category is black youth culture.

Selection of Method

Since my research question is concerned with understanding the meaning-making of the students in relation to their identity and media culture, it was therefore important to find a method that was coherent with my research question: a methodology that seeks to be ideographic rather than nomothetic in emphasis. In other words, my emphasis is on using a qualitative framework to develop an understanding and interpretation of the ways in which students make meanings in their lives rather than developing causal laws that can then be applied ahistorically to all schools and social contexts.

So what is qualitative research and what does it offer a researcher interested in "understanding" a research problem? Although often presented as in opposition to quantitative research, both theoretically and methodologically, the two paradigms do overlap at times and can complement each other empirically. Merriam and Simpson (1995) suggest that:

> . . . the key philosophical assumption upon which all types of qualitative research are based is the view that reality is constructed by individuals in interaction with their social worlds. Thus, there are many "realities" rather than one, observable, measurable reality which is key to research based in the positivist paradigm. (p. 97)

Such an understanding of qualitative research draws on symbolic interactionism and phenomenology (Mead, 1934; Schutz, 1972) for its philosophical orientations. The latter thus delineates qualitative research as processes that highlight how people construct and interpret their worlds, and thus make sense of their lives. As Merriam and Simpson (1995) argue:

> . . . the overall purposes of qualitative research are to achieve an understanding of how people make sense out of their lives, to delineate the process (rather than the outcome or product) of meaning-making, and to describe how people interpret what they experience. (p. 97)

In a similar vein, Schwandt (1994) posits that the goal of qualitative research can be described as "an abiding concern, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor's definition of a situation, for 'Verstehen'" (p. 118). However, although the importance of the students' definition of the situation is recognised, I also view with caution a paradigm that becomes "predicated on the empiricist's picture of social reality [and] omits something most important, namely, intersubjective, common meanings–'ways of experiencing action in society which are expressed in the language and descriptions constitutive of institutions and practices'" (Taylor 1971/87, p. 75 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p. 20).

My research, although concerned with interpretation and meanings attributed to televisual and aural texts, also tries to "avoid the reduction of meanings to free-floating discourses" or the "positivist imperative of reducing them to structural variables" (Morrow, 1994, p. 294). Thus my readings led me to Thompson's (1990) *Ideology and Modern Culture* and to adopt a "depth hermeneutic" framework as a methodological approach. Thompson developed his framework from the work of Paul Ricouer whose purpose was to build on the work of Heidegger and Gadamer without abandoning methodological concerns. However, Thompson distinguishes himself from Ricouer at those times where he "places too much emphasis on what he calls the semantic autonomy of the text and thus . . . abstracts too readily from the social-historical conditions in which texts, or analogues of texts, are produced and received" (p. 278).

This methodological framework allows me to understand the research participants' perspectives while at the same time being able to locate those perspectives within a wider political, socio-economic and historical framework. In many ways the framework offers a way to counteract relativism evident within interactionism, and offers a degree of depth to my research. Such a depth-hermeneutic framework consists of three phases. The first is related to the development of a social-historical understanding of cultural studies and "blackness." The second phase involves analysis of the students' discourse as narrative; while the third can be seen as interpretation/reinterpretation of previous social-historical and discourse analyses in relation to each other.

Measurement and Sampling Validity/Reliability

For qualitative research, which aims to move away from positivist claims of neutrality and objectivity, issues such as validity and reliability have to be viewed in a different way. Traditional research uses internal and external validity as indicators of the reliability. Often it is assumed that if the researcher adheres to a specific methodology, then the results garnered will represent the truth. In explaining this point further, Kinchelow & McLaren (1994) suggest that:

> . . . traditional research argues that the only way to produce valid information is through the application of rigorous research methodology, that is, one that follows a strict set of objective procedures that separate researchers from those researched . . . . The pursuit of rigour then becomes the shortest path to validity. Rigour is a commitment to the established rules for conducting inquiry. (p.151)

Kinchelow & McLaren (1994) would therefore rather use the descriptor of "trustworthiness because it signals a different set of assumptions about research than does validity" (p. 151). Thus claims can be said to be truthful rather than truth. External validity–the extent to which findings can be generalised to other situations, has also been the source of much debate. Some authors suggest that we might use the term working hypotheses rather than "empirical generalisations." Such generalisations can be seen to reflect a situation with specific constructions in a particular context. Others argue that it is up to the consumer of the researcher to decide its generalisability rather than the researcher.

This inability to draw up causal laws that can be automatically applied across research sites has been criticised by theorists who work within a more positivist framework and are concerned with the generalisability of interpretivist studies. However, advocates of qualitative interpretivist research counter the latter criticism with the argument that, "generalisability in interpretive studies . . . rests on the reader's ability to generalise personally to their own situations rather than on the researcher's generalising to populations larger than the sample used in the particular study" (McCutcheon, 1981, p.8).

As well, theoretical contestation emerges around how to account for what, in more quantitative research projects, is known as reliability. This issue of reliability is problematic in social sciences, since human behaviour is not static and:

> . . . replication of qualitative research will not yield the same results, but this does not discredit the results of a particular study; there can be numerous interpretations of the same data. The more important question for qualitative researchers is whether the results are consistent with the data collected. (Merriam & Simpson, 1995, p. 102)

Among qualitative researchers, a variety of terms are used to indicate this orientation. They range from Guba and Lincoln's concept of "consistency" to Patti Lather's (1991) "credibility." Lather suggests that "if illuminating and resonant theory grounded in trustworthy data is required, we must formulate self-corrective techniques that check the credibility of data, and minimise the distorting effect of personal bias upon the logic of evidence" (p. 66). As part of this process, she indicates four main concepts: triangulation, construct validity, face validity, and catalytic validity. During the course of my research I attempted to integrate and make space for these concepts, with varying degrees of success.

Triangulation involves the utilisation of research designs that seek counter patterns as well as convergence within the data. In this study triangulation of the data was via the use of different sources of data, administrators/teachers, as well as different methods of collection (focus and individual). In effect, I interviewed a larger sample of students than used in the study so that I could get at a wider range of perspectives. All of this was carried out against a background of existing theory, garnered in my literature search and my previous study. The ability to draw on existing literature and research enabled me to seek counter patterns as well as convergence within the data. In terms of construct validity, I attempted a constant dialogue between the theory, the participants' narrative, and myself. This perspective is best captured by Foucault's comment that a demanding, prudent "experimental attitude is necessary; at every moment, step by step, one must confront what one is thinking and saying, with what one is doing, with what one is" (Foucault, cited in O'Farrell, 1989). This self-reflexivity involved operating "within a conscious context of theory–building" (Lather, 1991, p. 67), questioning what one's role is in relation to the theory we are exploring.

Researcher Identity–Looking Within

Unlike other research methodology, with qualitative research the primary instrument used for data collection and analysis is the researcher. As such, it is important to recognise the role that my own subject position plays in the construction of the research question and population, as well as the collection and analysis of the data. As Patti Lather (1991) argues, formulation of a research question may reflect one's raced, classed and gender positions within society. To argue that value-free factual research is possible in social sciences is to insist on a "fact/value dichotomy [which] simply drives values underground" (p. 51). However, this is not to suggest that there is an automatic alignment between a person's factual position and their value position. Although the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of the students who participated in the study, the study also involves the construction and formation of my own identity as a researcher, academic, and black woman.

Positioning of myself as a black, middle-class, heterosexual woman with experiences of living as an immigrant in white-dominated societies recognises that knowledge and meanings are produced from a specific social and political understanding of the world. We all have a standpoint from which we speak, even if we do not recognise it as such. Therefore subjectivity should not always be feared, for "subjectivity can be seen as virtuous, for it is the basis of researchers' making a distinctive contribution, one that results from the unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data that they have collected" (Pershkin, 1988, p. 55). Although explaining/reflecting on such a standpoint and how I came to decide on this research question may reveal the filter through which my research on media culture and identity formation was constructed, it does not provide a complete guide to the embedded bias that results from such a positioning. For postpositivists such as Patti Lather, the latter recognition of self in the research process goes a long way to undermine a *naïve empiricism* that makes the effort to leave subjective tacit knowledge out of the "context of verification." Thus, inquiry is increasingly recognised as a process whereby tacit (subjective) and prepositional (objective) knowledge are interwoven and mutually informing (Lather, 1991, p. 66).

As Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue, the researcher enters the research process from "within a distinct interpretive community, which configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act" (p. 11). The research process can be seen as having an effect not only on the subjects but also on the researcher. Gaining access to the school setting and the students serves to highlight a consistent tension among discourses of qualitative research, researcher subjectivity, and the demands that emerge from the organisation and structure of schools. For "gate-keepers" to educational settings, (i.e., Faculty of Education, the administrators, and teachers) research in schools should: be instrumental, having a direct application to schools, produce a report within the school year, and should be in a language that is accessible to a non-sociologist. However, the latter can at times be in tension with the expectations of a graduate student conducting inductive research, that develops slowly from the research process!

Gestation of the Research Question(ethics proposal, gaining entry, selection of sample)

Selection of Site/Gaining Entry

Previous to commencing the research project I had to undertake an ethics review, not only within my university department, but also at the school board and school levels. The school board level consisted of a conversation with an official concerning the appropriateness of the research, how black students would be identified, and tales of caution about other such racialised research projects having encountered administrative difficulties. Often, gaining entry is dependent on the ways in which previous researchers in the field have conducted themselves. In this case, the board's experiences with other researchers undertaking research on African Canadians came into play to evaluate my research project. Following a positive response from the school board, I then had to get approval from the school itself. This approval process involved sending my interview schedule for vetting as well as being interviewed by the vice-principal and principal. Because of the sensitivity of school administrators towards issues of race and identity, the school board and the school site for the research both had to vet my research questions and possible interpretations that the students might give them. There are problems carrying out research within schools since often the administration at the board and school level is reluctant to highlight issues of racialisation. The "colour-blind" and often well- meaning attitude of teachers and administrators that prevails can become counterproductive. Such liberal notions of equality ignore the effects of racism and racialised identities (Chalmers, 1997). In terms of my research questionnaire, the main concern from the school was that the questions seemed to coerce the students into being negative towards the school:

1. What is it like to attend this high school?
   Probes: How did you feel when it happened?
   What do you think was the cause?
   Has it happened to any one else? Can you give me an example?
   Think back. When is attending this high school a positive experience? When is attending this school not a positive experience?

Previous to entry into the "field" I kept a field journal of events, perspectives and other reflections. This journal proved useful in illustrating the research process, and encouraged a process of self-reflexivity during the varying stages of the research. The notes in my journal can be categorised in four ways, following Laurel Richardson (1994). Below, she gives an explanation and example as to the insights that can be gained from her method of categorisation:

> · *Observation notes* (ON): These are as concrete and detailed as I am able to make them. I want to think of them as fairly accurate renditions of what I see, hear, feel, taste, and so on.
> · *Methodological notes* (MN): These are messages to myself regarding how to collect "data,"–who to talk to, what to wear, when to phone, and so on. I write a lot of these because I like methods, and I like to keep a process diary of my work.
> · *Theoretical notes* (TN): These are bunches, hypotheses, poststructuralist connections, critiques of what I am doing/thinking/seeing. I like writing these because they open up my text–my field note text–to alternative interpretations and a critical epistemological stance. It is a way of keeping me from being hooked on my "take" on reality.
> · *Personal notes* (PN): These are feelings statements about the research, the people I am talking to, myself doing the process, my doubts, my anxieties, my pleasures. I do

> no censoring here at all. I want all my feelings out on paper because I like them and because I know they are there anyway, affecting what/how I lay claim to knowing. Writing personal notes is a way for me to know myself better, a way of using writing as a method of inquiry into the self. (p. 526)

At times, the reflexivity undertaken in the journal enabled insight into the ways in which representation of an identity was not static and linear, and was therefore problematic. As part of an ongoing project I also kept newspapers clippings of items that referred to youth, media, racism, or racialisation, bought copies of magazines that the students read, listened to various genres of rap music, dance hall reggae, and watched various programs of Xtend*DaMix* and *RapCity*. In line with of developing a social-historical analysis of "blackness" in Alberta and Canada, I began to read and search through archives for magazines and newspapers that might give an inkling as to the ways in which "asymmetries are systematic and relatively stable." The latter analysis helps to elucidate the broader social context within which the students interact with media and form their identities. The pre-entry stage of research is a dual-edged process that involves seeking official permission, while at the same time unofficially going through a process of identifying a school that might fit the research profile of my study. Although, theoretically, a number of schools fit such a profile, many schools were unwilling to participate in a project because of the topic of my research. As one principal indicated, "I like my students to think of themselves as the same." Such a colour-blind statement, while laudable on the surface, in actuality subscribes to a discourse that Virginia Chalmers (1997) identifies as "sameness with different colour" (p. 72). Although the principal wanted the students to be colour-blind, many of the students interviewed in this present study and in my previous research did not see themselves as colour-neutral, either within or outside school. For the students, racialisation is a point of difference that cuts across the official "colour-blind" atmosphere of Canadian society and schools that do not recognise the ways in which students come to school with raced and classed selves. In the end, the decision on which school to use as a site for the generation of data was chosen for a variety of reasons. These reasons ranged from: it had sufficient number of students of African descent to enable me to select a sample in terms of class and ethnicity; I knew some of the teachers that worked there; and one of the administrators was willing to support my request for access[2].

Student Sample

Since no official records are kept as to the ethnic origins of students, it was problematic to ascertain the percentage of black students who were enrolled in the school. I therefore initially relied on students' self-identification as being of African descent in order to gather a subset of the African-Canadian students at an orientation meeting. Gaining access to the students was via a teacher who informed students about my research and the date of the orientation. On the day of the orientation, I provided lunch and drinks for those attending. This proved a good incentive for some of the students, as one student indicates below, it was his primary reason for coming to the orientation meeting! At the meeting I identified who I was, what my research was about, and discussed the consent forms. I presented myself as a black researcher who was interested in media culture and how it affected their lives. Those in attendance consisted of male and female students of African descent, with family ancestry in the Caribbean, continental Africa, and the United States. The students varied in age from 15-18 years old. Whereas the 18-year-olds were able to sign their own consent forms, those students under 18 had to also obtain the consent of their parents. For the latter students I sent letters to parents explaining the research and requesting signed consent for their child to participate in the research (see Appendix). I used the orientation to discuss issues of ethics. In particular I stressed that any information provided would be confidential and that in writing the thesis or any subsequent publication, their anonymity would be maintained. As well, I stressed that any student could withdraw at any stage before, during, or after the research process.

Following the orientation and while waiting for the consent forms to be returned, I visited the school a number of times to observe two school-based cultural events. The following extract from my research journal highlights, using Richardson's codes, the ways in which representation of cultures is always in relation to something else and that a specific reading of a social situation is always in context and cannot be guaranteed. The school is laudable as it positions itself as multicultural and open to representations of students' cultures via a festival of cultures. However, my journal queries such representations:

> ***Journal Extract: Culture Jamboree Wednesday 24 February***
> *Today I visited the school to watch the "Culture Extravaganza," an annual emphasis on national culture. At times the school attempts to offer a public space wherein students "experience" each other's cultures. Various food stalls are set up in the school, and these displays are varied and well supported by the students who mingle and buy a variety of dishes. As part of the festival, students also put on a display of various dances that are viewed as representative of their culture of "origin." (ON) The rationale for this sharing of cultures is based on the liberal premise that by sharing, one is opening oneself to a process of acceptance. However, what was interesting about the display was the way in which some cultures were represented via "folk" culture, with representation based upon specific ways of dressing, specific forms of movement: a representation of a tradition, history, time and effort. For others, in this case the self-identified black students, representation was much more problematic. How can black culture be represented? Is it located within the continent of Africa? Is it located in the US? Or is it not located anywhere? At times reinforces a hierarchy of culture in terms of the ways in which "culture" is represented (TN)*

I was particularly interested in the ways in which the sense of the "relational" affected the reading of the cultures. I watched the Scottish dancers in relation to an African-Canadian group of girls:
Observation Notes made on site:
3rd dance. Scottish dancers. Dressed in traditional Scottish dance costume– waistcoat, kilt and leggings. The dance is choreographed, energetic, and looks professional. Well received by audience. Bagpipe music.
4th dance is by a group of black girls. The music is sort of ?? traces of Caribbean rhythm. Five girls dressed in everyday clothes, tones to black and white. Some dressed in trousers, Capri pants, or shorts. Mainly moving and "winding." The winding part brings cheers. Also notice that some of black boys are barracking and shouting comments, particularly the young man with the cane rows[3]. Wonder who he is? (PN)

Collection of Data and Analysis

Interviews – Focus groups

I devised a focus route of questioning for the groups, which started from a general question and then moved to the specific and the sensitive (Krueger, 1988). Open-ended questions were used in both focus and individual interviews because they are "important when you want to determine the salience or importance of opinions to people, since people tend to mention those matters that are most important to them" (Plays, p. 173). As well, "it assumes that meanings, understandings and interpretations cannot be standardised: they cannot be obtained with a formal, fixed-choice questionnaire (Denzin, p. 1989, p. 42). As all students were willing, individual and focus interviews were tape-recorded so that all the comments and statements made by the participants were recorded. The importance of the latter can be found in Goode's (1972) postulation that "the tape-recorded interview is a liberating influence on the interviewer because it permits him/[her] to devote full attention to the respondent" (p. 253).

Focus groups were held three times on a sex-specific basis during the lunch hour in a classroom at school. The rationale for organising the students into sex-specific groupings is that much of the literature (Labov, 1973; Spender, 1982) indicates the ways in which gender construction can act as a powerful determinant of group activities. The focus groups were used primarily to orient myself to the students and to elicit emergent questions for the individual interviews. Following the return of consent forms by those willing to participate, I arranged a first meeting of the sex-specific focus groups. At these focus group meetings I asked the students to fill out forms with their demographic details as well as an indication of academic history, their choices in music, and TV shows. As well, I developed a grid of the times and days various students were available.

Most of the data gathered in the focus groups is not included in the data presented here but is instead used as a source of triangulation. The exception to this was one male focus group that discussed gender relationships, and one female focus group discussion of gender and the step team. The rationale for the inclusion of the latter is to give an understanding of the discourses that emerge within focus groups. The focus groups that I conducted differ from others oriented to market research in that the students know the issue under discussion, and the participants are acquainted with each other through school. As a method, focus groups reveal the ways in which competing discourses, in this case racialised, operate within a discursive space. An analysis of interaction within focus groups can reveal shared language on a topic, what was taken for granted, and what was asked for clarification. As well, it can elucidate the belief and myth about the topic, that are shared, taken for granted or challenged as those within the group use sources of information to justify views. Similarly, a group situation allows one to record the tone, voice, body language and degree of emotional engagement when the participants talk to each other.

Interviews – Individual

Although I interviewed more than twenty individual students, at least once, the fourteen students who formed the focus of this study were interviewed at least twice, and often three times, for 45 minutes to one hour-and-a-half for each session. Interviews took place generally during the student's free/study periods, lunch hour, or after school. The after-school interviews were often longer and offered the chance for continuity of thought and ideas. In comparison, lunchtime sessions often seemed to be short, and required a period of reacquaintance as we tried to follow up on a point raised in the previous session. Further constraints in terms of time and space were imposed by the administrators, who requested that I interview the students only on school premises and not outside the school. The following extract from my field journal illustrates the difficulties of getting common times for the interviews:

> *20th April*
>
> *Arrived at school to witness a fight. The students stood around watching–to see what would happen. I tried to intervene, but the two young men were grasping each other tightly. They were oblivious to my pleas. Any way, I was saved because one of the administrators intervened–very effectively–by grabbing them both by the shoulder and leading them away. I wondered if they receive training on how to intervene in fights. Saw quite a few of my research students watching. Doreen told me that Langston was in the library doing a project. Toussaaint was hanging by a wall–his usual self, very pleasant. Arranged an interview and he suggests that he will be around on Wednesday. We shall see. Went in to school and met Langston. He apologised for the inconvenience, but he had to go to do a project. Message from Melvin that he can't make it on Monday but that Tuesday he'll be around. Joy came at*

> *the end of the day to let me know that she has a project. That's the problem. These kids are, quite rightly, busy with schoolwork.*

As well as individual interviews with the students, I interviewed two administrators and had several casual conversations with teachers in order to garner background information on the school. The latter proved useful, but the interviews are not cited directly within the thesis, since I had not requested nor received permission from the board to interview teachers. Location of the student interviews was also of import. Once I had gained access to the school, the administrator who was my link with the school and the bureaucracy was supportive and allocated a classroom for focus group interviews and a small office within which I conduct most of my individual interviews with students. Having a consistent location proved useful in that if students needed to find me to change an interview time or to discuss some issue of concern, they could do so easily. As well, the location was relatively private so that students could speak without being easily overheard. Location and timing of interviews are crucial again.

Research can be seen as an active and ongoing process during which both researcher and participants are called on to be self-reflective. This process of self-reflection reveals the ways in which the interview situation is not "objective" but becomes part of a process of making the self. Often as researchers we forget such processes of self-reflection, preferring instead to think of participants as fixed in terms of self-conception and the information they give. For me, the self-reflexivity of the students was an important dimension to which some of them alluded. At times this self-reflection was related to the students' positioning within the research process and how it affected their own subjectivity and sense of self:

> J: *So why did you become involved in the project? Why did you volunteer?*
> Gerald: *For being interviewed? /yeah/ Cos you asked me?*
> J: *[laugh] That's an interesting one for a man who doesn't do what people ask?*
> Gerald: *Oh I don't know. I just thought it would be interesting. Just to like see for myself cos like sometimes I think about things but I don't really talk about them. So now I can talk about things.* ***Kinda give me a better understanding of myself, too.***

For another participant, the interview sessions allowed a degree of reflection that enabled a degree of understanding to an issue:

> Langston: *I like Stephen King. It's kind of escape from the normal. Actually, the kind of books I read are almost the same.* ***Like you just made me realise that.***

Or another student:

> Gerald: *I only realised that talking to you now.*

Or an extract from my journal:

> *Afterwards, Will came to tell me that Malcolm was always talking back to teachers and giving them "lip." Volunteered that "I don't like him myself" "I don't experience those things myself maybe because I am mixed." Interestingly enough the other student was also "mixed"* (Journal)

Over the past five years, as my experience with interviewing increased, I have moved away from a position that regards interviewing as extracting objective facts from objective subjects to a position that sees interviewing as more akin to generating data. Peter Collins (1998), in supporting the need to move from viewing data as "out there" waiting to be gathered, argues that many students of research initially view the interview as:

> a kind of smash and grab opportunity in which they have to accost some innocent bystander and relieve them of whatever useful "data" they may have. They are aided and abetted in their assumptions by texts which imply a "model" interview in which interviewers extract objective facts from presumably objective subjects. (p. 2)

For me, the interview is a process of interaction that involves not only the interviewee but also the interviewer as part of a process of creating dialogue. The researcher is never absent from the process of interviewing, but instead is part of the created dialogue that becomes defined as "an interview." Thus, drawing on Collins (1998), the research process is one of *generating* data rather than "relieving" the participant of data.

The interviews were semi-structured, with all interviews taking on a different order in terms of the questioning route rather than structured with a fixed questioning route. In defining the differences between semi-structured and structured interviews, I draw on Fontana and Frey (1994) who argue that:

> . . . [structured] aims at capturing precise data of codeable nature in order to explain behaviour within pre-established categories, whereas the latter [semi-structured] is used in an attempt to understand the complex behaviour of members of society without imposing any *a priori* categorisation that may limit the field of inquiry. (p. 366)

Following Spradley and McCurdy (1972), four kinds of interview questions were used during the individual interviews: grand tour questions ("Tell me about yourself"); structural questions; ("You have listed two types of rap—are there any more?"); contrast questions ("What are the differences between "nasty" girls and "nice" girls?"); attribute questions ("Tell me what 'acting black' is"). The initial interviews started with grand tour questions and then, as the interviews made progress, attribute, contrast, and structural questions were deployed. An example of a contrast question can be seen in the following example:

> J: *What about your friends? Do you tend to dress in a similar style or do you dress very differently?*

It was interesting that in asking the students to compare both methods of generating data, most students preferred focus groups. As the following range of narratives indicate, focus groups were popular with both genders:

> *"Cuz you could see other peoples' point of views."*

or

> *"If you can't answer questions, some one else would answer it."*

or

> *"And you could build off each other's ideas plus if some one says something it could bring back a repressed thought."*

Research Process

As stated earlier, one's subject positioning can have an effect on the research. My subject positions diverge in terms of age and religion from most students, and gender and class for others. Recognition of these differences is important because the ways in which the students identify me may well affect the ways in which rapport is established and the degree to which I am trusted. Although adolescence as a stage of development is similar in Europe and North America, there are differing socio-cultural discourses that temper and refine this development. Thus, the growth and changes in televisual communications has been significant since my own adolescence.

Attempting to build a rapport is important in terms of getting participants to feel a sense of trust and thus a willingness to discuss often-sensitive aspects of their personal lives. With some students this was achieved quite quickly, while with others trust was never fully gained. Another important aspect of this development of a context of trust is the ways in which we handle sexist, classist and homophobic comments made during the interviews. It is necessary to recognise that if we ask interviewees to share their lived experiences with us, and our research purpose is to develop an understanding of how they construct those lived experiences, then our reaction during the interview should not be combative in relation to remarks that they make. Thus, when students made comments that were homophobic or sexist, my reaction to the comment was to use probes for further clarification as to how they come to position themselves in relation to or within such discourses.

Timing of the interviews varied from interviewee to interviewee, and from one interview to another. Those interviews that were conducted at 8'o'clock in the morning took on a different dynamic in comparison to those that took place at the end of the tiring day. As well, the length of interviews contributed to the development of a sense of rapport. Whereas the interviews conducted at lunch were often cut short, the interviews in the late afternoon were not only longer, but also allowed for development of themes and greater use of probes. Often, due to the stress of interviewing, by the end of the school day I was tired. I found it surprising that interviews where the student was reluctant to talk openly were as mentally taxing as those interviews where the interviewee spoke at length about personal issues. For example, one interviewee in particular was so intense in terms of discussions dealing with negative experiences and struggles with issues of authority that I felt mentally drained after each session. However, with other students interviews were livelier, with much laughter. The use of laughter during the interviews–in its many forms (ironic, sarcastic)–was important in both developing rapport and in revealing a sense of shared meanings and understandings. Illustrative of development of rapport was the ability of the students to ask questions of me about the research question I had asked or about my own personal circumstances. While in mainstream research such "personal" questions to the interviewer would be deflected, I answered such questions. The issue of to what extent I was totally open in answering questions was made easy for me because the students, in deference to my position as an adult not well known to them, did not cross the boundaries of polite social interaction. They did not ask me questions about my sexuality, or my class, though they did ask about my religiosity and my own television-viewing habits. Perhaps the only time I wasn't forthcoming with information were the times when students made derogatory comments about mixed relationships. At such times I did not reveal that I my self am in a so-called mixed relationship. With other students, I offered this information if it was a part of the flow of conversation. Such a willingness to go "off task" can help to indicate to the interviewee that I was open to what Lather identifies as reciprocity—"give and take, a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (1991, p. 57). Lather suggests that interviews conducted in an interactive, dialogic manner that requires self-disclosure on the part of the researcher encourage reciprocity (1991, p. 60). Below are examples of development of such a rapport or reciprocity:

J: *Any questions you want to ask me?*

> **Student:** *I had a question. What's your goal here? What do you hope to achieve?*

An example from another transcript highlights how a student felt enough comfort during our dialogue to be able to pose questions to me in order to illustrate the points being made:

> **Student:** *I disagree with the fact like, I was brought up really strict to believe like, Okay, in the Bible how it says like, "I don't know if you are familiar with the Bible?"*

At other times a sense of rapport was increased when I illustrated an understanding of youth culture to the interviewee rather than presenting myself as naïve adult. At such times there was change in the tone of the interview as my knowledge was acknowledged:

> **Student:** *Gisa is like a wise guy, the only thing is like a [pause] a couple of them like*
> J: *Cappadonna?*
> **Student:** *Whew!!* [surprised I knew rapper's name] Cappadonna is wicked. His new CD is so.

Sometimes expressions of naïvity were important in getting the participants to see themselves as having knowledge that was valuable to me–to see themselves as being "experts" on media culture.

However, achieving rapport was not consistent across interviews, and at times there was evidence of what Foucault describes as the "social effects of power." Such effects of power meant that the students adopted specific modes of behaviour (discursive practices) that produce differing types of student subjectivity. The latter indicated a relation of dominance and the extent to which the interview format was not as "open" and representative of an "insider" conversation as one might assume. Such modes of behaviour included: waiting to be given permission before leaving the interview room; removing a cap before participating in the interview; asking permission before illustrating a song which included swear words. All the latter practices indicate a censuring of the self and deferral to my authority and status as an adult within the school. The incidents also indicate that an emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome (Acker et al., 1983, p. 431). An example of this deference to authority can be seen in the following statement in which the student sought my permission before rapping a song with "cuss" words:

> **Student:** *I can use the words er [pause] even the cuss and that. //Yeah// Okay, well . . .*

Or a comment about a student taken from my field journal:

> *"He regards most of the males as ill disciplined. Noticed he also defers to perceived authority—he never enters the inner room where I undertake the interviews unless he is invited."*

Student Interpretation of the Research Project

Reasons for getting involved with the interviews reflect racialised understandings of the ways in which experiences of blackness have been marginalised. Such recognition of marginalisation affects perception of the research project and willingness to become involved as a participant. For two of the participants their response reveals a racialised sense of self that intersects with their motivation to participate with the research project:

> J: *Why did you get involved with this research project?*
> Student: *'Cuz I wanted to help you out, not many people are interested in black things. So when black people come around I always want to help.*

At other times, the racialised response was student-initiated and highlighted not only the racialised aspects of the research but also the ways in which such a project intersected with other social relations within school and discourses of blackness:

> Student: *I am kind a glad that someone is doing like a study, I think that's kind a neat. And you are black too so that even makes it better. I am glad that everyone [fellow students] is kind of co-operating, like came out, wanting to do it.*

For others, the reasons for getting involved with the research project were less altruistic!!

> J: *How did you hear about the research?*
> Student: *Your research? I just heard about it the same day. I didn't even know what was going on till you started talking. I just heard that there was like pizza.*

Throughout the interviews, the questions posed highlighted the relationship between reception and production of meaning. To detect media receptivity, a dual process was used in discussing the various films and television programs watched by the students. For example, some questions were open-ended, "Tell me about the last movie that you went to see at the cinema?" Other questions were more specific, referring to films in which the actors were predominantly black or the theme of the movie was about experiences of peoples of African descent. Overall, the foci of the questions were to tap into the representations within media culture discourse within the wider society. Among the films that fall within this racialised category are: *Soul Food, Boyz N Hood, Waiting to Exhale, Set it Off* and *Amistad*

Sexual Orientation

As adolescents, issues of sexuality abound in the students' everyday experiences, as they position themselves to differing discourses of sexuality that are mediated by the television programs, music videos and films. With regard to sexual orientation, the film *Set it Off* proved to be a starting point in terms of such discussions. In the film, Queen Latifah, the popular rap singer, portrays a lesbian who lives openly with her partner. Although I had viewed and interpreted the film, previous to the interview, as one constructed to balance the male-dominated "hood" films, I had missed the significance of the lesbian relationship in terms of differing readings that might have emerged from the film. Thus, when one student highlighted the relationship during an early interview, I was able to use this information as a cue in subsequent interviews with other students and to note how they position themselves in relation to the original student's comments. Responses varied. For some students, sexual orientation was not discussed in reference to the film. For others, it emerged during a process of evaluation of the film. For those students who did not mention sexual orientation of the characters I would wait until discussions of the film had ended and then ask a direct question such as, "What did you think of the character portrayed by Queen Latifah? Issues of sexual orientation were further explored by asking an open-ended question about the meaning of the word "batty man" [homosexual]. I had overheard the use of the word in relation to one of the students in a focus group and was able to ask about its meaning and use among black students. Discourses relating to sexuality were further explored via the terminologies and slurs used by the participants among themselves or during the interviews.

Musical preferences and tastes were also discussed in an open-ended manner, letting the individual students lead in terms of description and genre. Thus reggae, dance hall reggae, soca, and calypso, as well as rap, r&b and jazz were discussed. In terms of probes, I was interested in the ways in which women rappers who use sexually explicit lyrics were received. I specifically asked the students their responses to the music of Lil Kim and Foxy Brown, two women noted for their sexually explicit lyrics. I wanted to identify how gender intersects with the reception of sexually explicit-lyrics. In terms of magazines, I again used a dual process of questioning. I asked open-ended questions such as "Tell me about magazines that you read," as well as more specific probes such as "Tell me about which part of the magazine you read first?" To reinforce my understandings of the magazine reading habits of the students, I also regularly bought and read *The Source* and *Vibe*, the primary magazines bought and discussed by the students (though not necessarily widely purchased).

Data Analysis/Writing

Generating Themes

Although analysis is often seen as a separate stage from data collection, I found that I began my analysis during the process of data collection. This tentative analysis allowed the adjustment of my overall research question in relation to the empirical reality that I encountered, as well as the opportunity to explore tentative themes. For example, the following chart from my field journal illustrates the way in which I was trying to understand how rap music was viewed along a continuum:

Gangsta ------------------------------	Snoop----------------------------------	Puff Daddy
Wu-Tang		Pretty Boys jewellery
Dirty old Ba	[talk about experience/emotions]	

All interviews were audio-taped and later transcribed so that I would have direct access to the students' narratives. However, transcription proved a daunting task, as I had amassed a large number of interviews primarily due to my decision to use a larger number of students to triangulate my results. While I was at the research site I was unable to complete transcription of the tapes and fully develop a grounded theory as recommended by ethnographers such as Spradley (1979). Instead, I listened to the recorded audio-tapes each day and then decided what areas I needed to focus on in consequent interviews. The research is not fully grounded theory in that a variety of hunches were explored in subsequent interviews rather than adopting strong domains to then follow through. Upon leaving the field, I started to transcribe all the tapes that I had collected. The latter was a time-consuming task that set my research back by several months because I transcribed all the intonations including pauses, laughter, etc. Once I had listened/ transcribed the tapes verbatim, I narrowed down the number of participants who would form the foci of my study. In making such choices, I used a method that might be more closely aligned with "criterion sampling." Such a process is:

> . . . based on the delineation of the research problems and questions, and on the identification of empirical and theoretical factors considered to affect problem and questions, field workers develop a set of attributes or dimensions that characterise a group or setting. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 73)

Having developed these attributes, I aimed for a subset of students who had family heritage in many parts of the African diaspora (i.e. the continent of Africa, the Caribbean and the United States). I chose these fourteen students because I had interviewed them at least twice and felt that there was a balance in terms of the data collected. As well, I wanted a sample that reflected the continent of Africa as well as its diaspora. Although six of the selected students' had both parents with heritages in the Caribbean, many of the students were of a variety of mixed heritages. Two students were of mixed heritage from Europe and Africa; one had mixed heritage from Africa and the Caribbean; one had mixed heritage from the Caribbean and Europe; and one had mixed African-Canadian settlers and African heritage. Two had both parents from the continent, and one had both parents from the US. It should also be noted that in comparison with the general numerical dominance of Jamaicans, they were under-represented among the students selected. In terms of gender balance, I chose seven girls and seven boys, and drew on their narratives to illustrate differing points. Not all students selected were represented within each theme discussed. Some students whose narratives fell within a theme were not highlighted because to do so would have led to their identification. In subsequent transcription of the tapes, I included the length of pauses in speech, interjections of speech between interviewer and interviewee, and run-on sentences, as well as where laughter took place. In presenting this data, I have chosen to omit much of the detailed transcription. As I see it, the purpose of the study is not to focus on linguistics but rather to analyze the ways in which students use speech as part of constructing a discourse.

Initially, I searched through the data generated by the interviews with the fourteen students, coding for a number of themes. However, coding the data proved problematic in terms of getting universal themes that seemed to cohere across the participants. I thought that the problem lay within the construction of my research project; the ways in which I had focussed on individual students; or that my data generation had been inadequate. Thus, I returned to the literature on research methodology (Spradley, 1979; Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lather, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Thompson 1990) and another bout of reading. Following this reading, I concluded that perhaps the problematic nature of the data analysis lay in my ambivalence towards the students and whether they were participants /"subjects" of my research or whether they were "informants." The distinction between the latter is an important one in that it affects the focus one adopts towards one's data (Spradley, 1979). Whereas constructing the students as "subjects" indicates an emphasis on critique of the students' perspectives, constructions of my research subjects as "participants" implies that I am seeking to understand their experiences of the media from such perspectives.

Searching through the data for phrases and topics that emerge and then writing down these words and phrases to represent topics and patterns became the initial step of an ongoing process towards developing coding categories. Also, according to the suggestions of Bogdan and Biklen (1982, pp. 156-162), I began to analyze my data using codes such as definition of the situation, process codes, event codes (Bogdan &

Biklen, 1982). Whereas the latter codes proved useful to some degree, it still left my data scattered and too broad. I then turned to James Spradley's (1979) discussion and definition of cultural themes as "any cognitive principle, tacit or explicit, recurrent in a number of domains and serving as a relationship among subsystems of cultural meaning" (p. 186). In particular, his discussion identified the ways in which thematic analysis allows access to "a holistic view of a culture or cultural scene." In the specific case of my research, the latter allowed me to crystallise and reorient the purpose of my research as: "A study of youth cultures among African-Canadian high school students" and to develop subsidiary questions such as "How do the students orient themselves to youth culture?" "How does orientation to specific forms of youth culture, especially those that emanate from the US, position the students in relation to discourses on identity." Of particular use to my analytic framework and reconceptualisation of my data was Spradley's (1979) postulation that "every culture, and every cultural scene, is more than a jumble of parts. It consists of a system of meaning that is integrated into some kind of larger pattern" (p. 186). While the latter indication of a larger pattern would seem to imply unity, Spradley (1979) also urges caution in looking for one all-encompassing theme within a study. He argues that a more likely scenario is that within data, a cultural scene will be integrated around a set of major themes and minor themes (p. 187).

Some of these themes, such as "diasporan identity," emerged from my original focus and existing cultural studies literature. Others, such as "acting black," emerged from analysis of the students' transcripts. As Spradley (1979) suggests:

> People do not express them easily, even though they know the cultural principle and use it to organise their behaviour and interpret experience. Themes come to be taken for granted; they slip into that area of knowledge where people are not quite aware or seldom find the need to express what they know. (p. 188)

Throughout the process of transcription I decided that I would not use a computer program such as NUD*ST. I manually coded the transcripts and then created computer files of narratives that reflected these developing themes. In using manual coding, I was able to gain a degree of familiarity with my data that might not have occurred had I assigned the coding to a qualitative program. I noted Coffey, Holbrook and Atkinson (1996) that:

> the categorisation of textual data and the use of computer software to search for them appear to render the general approach akin to standardised survey or experimental design procedures. In our view qualitative research is not enhanced by poor imitations of other research styles and traditions. Analytic procedures which appear rooted in standardised, often mechanistic, procedures

> are not substitute for genuinely "grounded" engagement with the data throughout the whole of the research procedures (7.6)

Participant-Initiated Theme

The North-South representation was one theme that emerged. Another was how constructing "the real" gives meaning to what is perceived as acceptable or unacceptable in the reception of media images and music. A topic within the narratives that becomes part of a theme is the way in which the students position themselves in relation to an "urban legend" concerning Tommy Hilfiger. As well as tracing the individuals within the narratives, I also tracked each participant's narratives for similarities as well as differences in relation to topics and themes. The following illustrates the way in which a student positions himself in relation to a discourse of power in two different scenarios during two different interviews:

> Student: *School? See that's just the big thing. I think because of that philosophy, I think that's just my biggest problem in school. Cos I find myself like [pause] when it comes to work or any thing in school. I just do it the way I want to. Like that was the biggest problem in [Design] class. Like me and my [Design] teacher fought over every single assignment because I would always want to do it the ways I want to do it and never the way he wants to do it.*

Or from the same student in another interview:

> *I can't blame the coach too much. Cos in everything I do, I take it as an art. Like I am an artist by nature. And if I am playing a game, I'll love to do it my way. And that's one thing my coach didn't take. He wanted it to be done his way.*

Thompson (1990) after Geetz, suggests that in terms of analysis of culture:

> what it requires is not so much the attitude of an analyst seeking to classify and quantify, but rather the sensitivity of an interpreter seeking to discern patterns of meaning, to discriminate between shades of sense, and to render intelligible a way of life which is already meaningful for those who live it. (p. 132)

In analysing my data, I recognised that as categories of analysis, gender, race, sexuality and class are not merely variables to be manipulated by the analyst, or "differences" that might either be described, subordinated to another variable, or set aside in order to generalise. Instead, race, class, sexuality, and gender are the fundamental hierarchies which create oppressive social relations, relations of inequality in which the subordination of one group constitutes and is the necessary condition for the privilege of another. Forms of oppression are neither separable nor "additive" but "interlocking" "manifold and simultaneous" (Carr in Payne, 1996, p. 454). While we can understand elements of race, class, and gender, we can only understand their effects in combination. As Dill and Zinn (1990) explain, "they operate in complex and confounding ways," as each black woman "experiences the effects of these hierarchies and her location in them as a whole. She cannot divide her life into component parts and say which status has the greatest impact at any given moment" (cited in Payne, 1996, p. 454). Also useful for my analysis is Cameron McCarthy's (1997) use of *nonsynchrony* whereby "individuals or groups, in their relation to their economic, political, and cultural institutions such as schools, do not share identical consciousness and express the same interests, needs or desires 'at the same point of time'" (Hicks 1991:221, p. 547). McCarthy's work helps to problematise my data so that rather than a uniform presentation of identity-information, the data allows for a plurality of positions. As well, his work sensitises one as to how relations of class, gender, sexuality that intersect with the individual or the group through a complex pattern or knot can have contradictory effects even in similar institutional settings such as the school.

The use of open-ended interviews as the primary source of data allows one to analyse the collected statements as a form of discourse. This variant of discourse analysis, draws on the work of Potter and Wetherell (1988) where the narratives of the students are regarded as a construction in which:

> Factual type description is meshed into explanation, and the whole package has an evaluative orientation. There is no way one could identify statements of fact, separate statements of explanation, and then statements offering the speaker's evaluation. The discourse works as a package–a seamless texture of talk. (p. 64)

Such an understanding of discourse analysis also recognises that people's talk will be oriented to different goals such as explaining, persuading, and justifying. Thus, context is important in terms of analysing discourse, and talk will change according to what the participant is doing. In trying to elicit the meanings that the students attribute to their identity and the ways in which such meanings draw on media culture, I also focus on the discourses used by the students. In adopting such a focus I recognise that:

> people in lay talk have access to a compendium of different interpretative resources, which they blend together to produce a wide variety of different effects. When we examine the argumentative patterns in ordinary discourse we do not find, therefore, the focus that comes from the requirements of scientific accountability, nor the neat organisation which might be expected from a person working from a consistent set of beliefs and attitudes or a single

> model of the world. Rather, what we see is fragmentation. (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 92)

Wetherell & Potter's work falls within what would be described by Billig (1997) as discursive or rhetorical psychology. Such a psychological focus becomes necessary "as studies move from the products themselves to the role that such products play in the lives of consumers." This is especially true for studies that seek to investigate the relations between audiences and media products. This latter understanding of discourse analysis is aligned in my study with Thompson's recommended analysis of narrative structure as the second phase of using a depth hermeneutic framework. For Thompson (1990), such an analysis of narrative structure examines "the patterns, characters and roles which are common to a set of narratives and which constitute a common underlying structure" (p. 288).

The themes highlighted by the research should be seen as only a fragment of the students' lives, captured momentarily, and contoured strongly by the socio-economic composition of those students who were willing to share aspects of their lives during the interviews. The understandings garnered from the research cannot be viewed as a "whole truth," but should instead be regarded as a mere fragment. As Rich (1979) argues, "there is no 'the truth,' 'a truth'–truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity" (p. 187). Verification of the latter can be seen in the following two incidents that occurred during data generation. The first incident was in response to discussion of youth culture. One respondent, in reference to other participants in the research, suggested to me that, "those guys won't know nothing, they don't *do* nothing." Interestingly, his suggestion of another student who "did lots at the weekend" proved futile, since the potential participant was not willing to "share" his "week-end" life. No doubt a very different perspective would have emerged had he "shared" his experiences with me. The second incident related again to lost perspectives. It refers to one of the students who took part in the early parts of the focus group but was involved in a violent incident out of school that resulted in him removing himself from school. Thus, the research process has to recognise the complexity of the material reality of the students' lives: a complexity that we can only begin to understand with the use of multiple perspectives to generate and analyze the data. As Douglas Kellner (1995) argues:

> To get a fuller picture of cultural texts and social phenomena, one must therefore grasp a wide range of constituent elements of cultural texts and practices. To do this properly, one needs to draw on a spectrum of critical methods, as some are better to grasp class, others to conceptualise gender and sexuality, and yet others to articulate race, myth and symbol, subliminal and latent dimensions of culture, and so on. (p. 97)

The latter comment by Kellner was one of the reasons why depth hermeneutics as a methodological framework was attractive; it offered more than one lens through which to read the lives of the students. Incorporating a social-historical analysis allows the study to move beyond a solely interpretivist lens in garnering the meanings that the students make in relation to the media, towards a position that recognises context and positionality in contouring meaning. "A text is constituted by its internal relations and its relations to its social-historical situation, and the more relations articulated in a critical reading, the better grasp of a text one may have" (Kellner, 1995, p. 99). In light of Kellner's persuasive argument, I provide a synopsis in chapter 4 of the social historical development of understandings of blackness within Alberta, the location of the study.

As stated above, presentation of my data is affected by ethical concerns with maintaining the anonymity of the students and the confidences in which they spoke to/with me. At times, concerns come to the fore as a tension emerges between how much detail to reveal and how much to subsume about individual participants. For example, in trying to explain the ways in which a student positions herself in relation to patriarchy, should one also indicate such a positioning is affected by her negative view of her father. Or in order to highlight tensions and fragmentation within the group, should I identify where students have been critical about others. Ethnographers suggest that one way around the latter dilemma is to change the details of the participants, or details of an event. But if we do so to any great extent, then application of differing social categories can effect the ways in which the narrative is read and interpreted. As a partial solution to the latter, I decided that maintaining the anonymity of my participants would take precedence over providing contextual clues to strengthen my data. My work thus lacks in-depth individual biographies of the fourteen students under discussion. The issue of maintaining anonymity also affected the ways in which I presented my data. When I first entered the research site, I was interested in conducting in-depth individual interviews to be presented as "life histories." However, I soon realised that because I was using one site and an easily-identifiable population, those involved in the research might be able to identify each other. Because of the latter I decided that I would not construct my data as individual biographies but would instead use an approach that would abstract generalities from particulars and examine the relational aspects of the data.

Another tension emerged around the writing up of the research findings and attempting to create a balance, if that is possible, between the perspectives of the participants and my own analysis and interpretation of their world. The latter refers indirectly to the issue of finding an appropriate voice with which to present my data. For example, should I foreground my voice as interpretation or my voice as description? While it can be argued that interpretation and description are not diametrically opposed, the achievement of a delicate balance was challenging. As

Acker, Barry and Esseveld (1983) argue, "How do we explain the lives of others without violating their reality?" (p. 429). Also, in what ways can I take account of Patti Lather's (1986) concern with reducing explanation solely to the intentions of the social actors: by taking into account the deep structures— psychological and social, conscious and unconscious—that shape human experience and perceptions, without committing the sin of theoretical imposition? (p. 262).

Once analysis was completed (to a degree, since no analysis is a final reading once and for all), and writing had begun, then the study moved into the final stage of depth hermeneutic approach: namely, interpretation/reinterpretation. During this final phase, interpretation proceeded by synthesis, or what Thompson (1990) identifies as "the creative construction of possible meanings" (p. 289). With the latter in mind, I have used the narratives of the students to directly illustrate the ways in which they use media culture to make meaning within their lives. Throughout the thesis I refer to the students as "participants" to indicate that the students are participating within a process of data generation. The descriptor is used in preference to "subject," or "respondent," both of which connote a different relationship between researcher and researched. Further, I have assigned each student a pseudonym to be used when his or her narratives are cited.

Chapter Summary

In concluding, this chapter provided an *audit trail* that outlines how the study was undertaken. Using the narratives of the students as well as extracts from my field journal, the chapter identified the ontological and epistemological difficulties encountered during the research process. In particular, a rationale was provided as to the choice of specific methods within a qualitative framework. The use of a focus group and individual methods, and the dynamics of establishing rapport when using such methods, are discussed in detail. Relations of power emerge as an underlying theme within the research process: between participant and researcher and between researcher and administrators. The difficulties of adhering to one specific research model during stages of analysis were also discussed, revealing how research in postpositivist times cannot be an "Immaculate Conception" built on one pure and rigid method. As such, the chapter outlines a study that falls within a qualitative framework, draws on ethnographic research methods, and produces what might best be described as a form of critical ethnography. Throughout the study I attempt to link the orientation of my work to a critical cultural studies framework. I use a depth hermeneutic framework, involving a critical cultural studies literature review, an analysis of the students' discourse via narrative structures, and a reinterpretation of the students' doxa using critical cultural studies as an analytic tool. In particular, I take note of John Fiske's (1994) argument that "cultural studies attempts to be multilevel in its methodology and in particular to explore the interface between the structuring conditions that determine our social experience and ways of living that people devise in them" (p. 197).

In the next chapter, the thesis analyzes the students' discourse as narrative to ascertain the ways in which they relate to black identity as a collective identity.

Notes

---

[1] A Manchester Guardian Weekly article highlights the findings by researcher Tony Sewell that black youth culture was to blame for lack of academic success (Hinsliff & Bright *Guardian Weekly*, p. 7, Aug 24-30, 2000).

[2] The importance of having some one, within the system, to speak about my credibility as a researcher was important. Thus a teacher involved in previous research projects with me proved essential in my ability to maintain a sense of credibility with my potential research site.

[3] Hair that has been plaited close to the head in straight rows from front to back of the head.

Chapter 4

A Sense of Belonging

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black," that is the recognition that "black" is essentially a politically and culturally constructed category, which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed transcultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in Nature. (Hall, 1988, p. 28)

Introduction

This chapter explores the students' narratives in order to understand their sense of belonging to a geographic region; their sense of place in the Canadian nation; and their sense of "origins." The students, as indicated by my discussion in chapter three, have links, via parents, with a variety of geographic backgrounds that span from the continent of Africa through to its diaspora in the Caribbean and North America. Further, this section looks at individual conceptions of culture and identity as they relate to notions of the African diaspora and black collective consciousness. As well, this chapter highlights the ways in which the students position themselves in relation to the diaspora and what Paul Gilroy identifies as a "dynamics of remembrance and commemoration"–a positioning that can lead to a sense of consciousness not dependent upon a nation state for fulfilment. Use of such dynamics of remembrance would allow the students to use their experiences within a white-dominated society to articulate a sense of "blackness" and "belonging" that crosses geographic borders.

The crossing of national borders implied by the students' narratives is enabled, to a certain extent, by the process of mediazation. This process, by which televisual and digital pulses cross the geographic boundaries of the nation state, affects the positioning of a black self in relation to Canadian society. The chapter identifies how black students draw on questions of origins, experiences, historical memory, and the influence of media culture, especially music, to enable construction of a common language full of symbolic meaning. The complexity of the latter is captured by Paul Willis' (1990) statement that:

> . . . often young black people are engaged in a doubly creative task. They are trying to negotiate what it means to be a black person in a white culture at the same time as they are engaged in the same creative activities as their white peers. (p. 8)

This chapter, in conjunction with chapters five to nine, provides the second phase of the "depth-hermeneutics" approach that studies "symbolic forms as complex symbolic constructions . . . which by virtue of their structural features, are able to, and claim to, represent something, signify something, say something about something" (Thompson, 1990, p. 22). They highlight structural features, patterns and relations.

However, before undertaking direct analysis of the students' narratives, I would like to present, by way of background, the social context of the school site and a social historical overview of the presence of African-Canadians in Alberta.

School Climate

Although the school site is not the direct focus of study, it still remains a common location within which the students interact and play out various identities. As such, the school acts as a site for discourses of style and music to meet and compete leading to the production of racialised, genderised and sexualised identities. These social differences are recognised differently within the school environment with some differences being highlighted while others are denied or muted. Schools are physically-bounded (walls, desks) institutions possessing distinct hierarchies and social structures, and roles, e.g. student, principal, counsellor, classroom teacher. It may be that schools, through the ethic of competition and selection, impose difference upon its students. Whereas racialised differences are denied and subsumed in official curriculums. Differences related to academic achievements are highlighted and reinforced. So it is that Cameron McCarthy's (1997) concept of *nonsynchrony* is useful here in identifying the ways in which students may coexist within a school environment but do not always share a similar consciousness. Although the school would like to perceive students synchronously as having an identical consciousness as "just students," the narratives indicate that they have racialised perceptions of themselves and others with whom they interact in school:

> J: So do you mix with people here? /Yeah/ When you say Brown what do you mean?
> Doreen: *Pakistani and Indian?*
> J: *Right, so that's what people tend to call them?*
> Doreen: *They call them brown. I don't [know] why.*
> J: *So you have brown and you have black. What else do you have?*
> Doreen: *Whites, and like Orientals.*
> J: *Oh Orientals . And Orientals is?*
> Doreen: *That's everything from like Asia.*

Part of this similarity in experiences is that for many students, high schools are institutions that they are coerced into attending. In particular, the link between schooling and certification provides a strong economic incentive for attending high school and thus being rewarded with a high school diploma. Life without such a high school diploma offers a dismal prospect economically. In this sense, the group of students interviewed were highly motivated to succeed economically, although they often questioned the ways in which the school organised the curriculum and knowledge production. As well, the built-in element of compulsion increasingly highlights how relations of power become sources of conflict within schools between teachers and students and students and students.

In selecting a site, various factors came into play: the ethnic composition of the school; the willingness of the administrators to allow me access; and the willingness of the students to participate in the study. The school is a large urban high school in Alberta with between 1500 and 2000 students, 15-18 years old. It attracts students from a variety of ethnic groups, and is often described as multicultural. Geographically it is located in a southern part of the city where the population is a mixture of white-collar and blue-collar workers. Many of the students who attend the school are the children of professionals who are upwardly mobile. They are attracted to the school because of its academic reputation and its ability to transfer students onto higher education. Among the students interviewed, this bias, in terms of socio-economic status, was evident, since many of the students came from homes where parents had accessed post-secondary education and where education was seen as a valuable tool for economic mobility. As one student's narrative indicated, most of the students came from a similar economic strata:

> J: *Similar economic status? Explain that a bit more.*
> Denzil: *Middle-class area. That big grey area of middle-class.*
> J: *You consider yourself middle-class? How do you determine that?*
> Denzil: *Just compare yourself to the people with more money I guess. I don't know.*
> J: *So you define yourself by comparing yourself to?*
> Denzil: *I am not a trailer head I am not a mansion so I am a [inaudible]*

Students indicated that in terms of school climate, and the numbers of black students, things had changed so that whereas a few years previously the school was exciting, with lots of black students, now their numbers were decreased:

> Etta: *See [School] used to be the school talked about. 'Cuz last year we had even like some of the kids [pause] from last year. In the very beginning of the year it was so good. Even all-last year I think it was fun. But at the very beginning there were so many people and then those people would get kicked out for skipping. And so you never saw them again. But then there were still those regulars that [pause] it was so bad 'cuz all the grade 12's and stuff. Then this year it's like [pause] it's all right [drop in energy-flat tone].*

The school has a variety of programs including a special academic stream for students whose marks suggest that they will go on to post-secondary institutions and university. Leon describes the differences between the academic and regular program:

> Leon: *The only thing I see that's different in [Academic Challenge] that's probably different from other things is that the teachers treat you differently.*
> J: *Oh in what way?*
> Leon: *Like they just think [pause] you are some kind of Einstein. //You think so?// Yeah. They generally think students in [Academic Challenge] are very, very, hard working. Maybe they are but that doesn't pertain to me. I am not that hard working. And they just treat you like that. Like it's not a big deal but, they just treat you differently. They say stuff and they expect you to know it. They do stuff [pause] Okay do this. Like I don't have a problem with all that. But I know it's just a different mode because I hear different stories.*

Thus the general student population is streamed into differing levels for their core subjects of English, mathematics, social sciences, and sciences at grades ten, eleven, and twelve. Two of the students interviewed were part of this academic challenge program.

Formal design regulates the physical and material experiences within the school. Physically, the school is laid out on one floor, with a central area within which students gather for social events. This student-defined space is located near to the school office and, as such, provides a "natural" opportunity for the teachers to "gaze" on the students as they socialise; the school administrators are only a "call" away from any trouble that might erupt. Students themselves were not unaware of this possibility of being within a Bentham-type panoptican (Foucault, 1977), even though partial. One student drew my attention to this when he described where he "hung out" when not in class, and why he choose such a location:

> Marcus: *I don't like to chill . . . right in front of the office . . . I just don't like them [teachers] watching always talking to me about something . . . . If we stay down there [by door] we can see them when they are coming.*

Corridors and lockers become focal points and sites where students mix and socialise. Often it is within these "freer" social spaces that students feel most closely monitored and most often challenged. One student's narrative recalled such an incident of conflict in the corridors:

> Melvin: *I am not causing like a big disturbance and then he[a teacher] is like . . . You guys shouldn't be in the hallways. Like he wasn't even paying attention . . . I am like "Ok, well look I am just going to my locker to get my stuff. And then he is like, "Why is she with you?" And I am like "Oh because we both are going to my locker to get my stuff." But then he is like, "Oh you guys are causing." I am like "Look I've*

> *been in this hallway for about a minute and a half because of you. I could have just went, did my little thirty-second thing, got to my locker and took off. But you have to stop in the middle of the hallway." And he is like "Oh but you guys are wandering all over the place." I'm like "Did you just see what I just did . . . then he is like "Oh are you getting lippy with me or something? And he is like "let's go to the office" so I was like "Ok let's go to the office" I was like "You want to go to the office and battle this we'll go and battle this."*

For some students, as described in the narrative above, this monitoring can result in admonishments as they challenge the authority of the school. As well, students are requested and expected to have an identification card that is created during the enrolment procedures at the beginning of the school year. The expectation is that students must carry this identification card at all times and to present it, on request, to staff.

At lunch times, various co-curricular activities, ranging from music through drama to athletics, are available for students to participate in. However, among the students interviewed, few were involved in school-initiated activities. The closest school-related activity was the "step-team" that was organised by a group of girls interviewed during the study. Since the step-team was not organised through a school club, many of the girls felt that it was not really a legitimate school club and therefore not under the control of the administration. The latter scenario highlights the issue of social control as it intersects with a racialised identity. For the girls interviewed, the ability to control who has access to the dance group was important, so that it could be defined as a group for black students.

Sociologists in the US, UK, and Canada have frequently identified the ways in which participation in school sports is often used to reinforce the symbolic representation of black males as concerned with a "body" rather than "mind" (Solomon, 1992). However, within this study, although many of the students were interested in sports, and seemed to have had successful sports careers in their junior high years, many of those interviewed had little involvement in high school sports. Observation of team photographs displayed in the school hallways suggests that only a small number of the African-Canadian students represented the school in organised sports. The following focus group narratives indicate the dynamics involved in the process of selection and rejection from sports teams. The perceived racialised dynamics to which the students allude is that black students are considered good at running but not for some of the other sports.

> Student 1: *School can ignore you for a year but then when track comes around [uproar]*
> Student 2: *We don't get on the other teams, how come at track time you want us. (female focus group)*

The reasons cited for this lack of involvement in school teams varied from prohibitive cost, to not being able to submit themselves to the discipline and requirements of the sports coach. One interesting narrative presented by a young woman indicated that the gendered nature of school teams was prohibitive:

> Student: *I'm not very good at joining sports teams and stuff 'cuz usually it's like [pause]; girls are girls boys are boys. I can't work with girls.*
> J: *Can you not?*
> Student: *No. I try and like [pause]; Ok boys get violent. But it's to the point of where they push you. They shove you on the ground whatever? Girls are like going for your eyes, ...//oh really?// Like they think stupid things. If you are on the field they scratch you. [pause]; It's stupid. Like the girls just go out so that they can scratch other girls while they are playing //right// Like get the ball away and stuff [pause]; it's stupid.*

Although the School Council was a student-based organisation with elected positions, none of the students interviewed were involved. One student indicated that the organation lacked the ability to truly represent the students, as their role was confined to social activities, rather than representing the views of students to those in the education hierarchy:

> Denzil: *No I found the students don't have much rights in what goes on in the school. "You have to do this you have to learn this, and you have to learn that's how it is. Don't argue"*
> J: *So do you think you have a right to have your voice heard?*
> *Student: Yeah*
> J: *Ah, On what basis?*
> Denzil: *We have to learn it I mean we are going to run the country when these people pass on. When these people retire. They may as well listen to us.*

As noted above, few of the black students were involved in school-based clubs and organisations. This situation was not uniform for all ethnic or racialised groups, many of whom were represented in a variety of photographs on the school walls.
The "hidden curriculum" (Jackson, 1978), through values, attitudes, or principles, implicitly conveyed to pupils by teachers, plays an important role in preparing students to adapt themselves to specific regimes of power (Foucault, 1980). Linked with Foucault's notion of regimes of power, the school seems to act as a site where disciplining of the self is an important factor in producing specific schooled subjectivities. A student's ability to keep time by arriving for school and lessons "on time" is important in enabling them to present/position themselves as "good" students. Attendance is also a part of producing this specific schooled subject. Non-attendance can produce consequences that result in exclusion from school. The following narrative indicates the pressure that develops into a process of exclusion from school:

> *Well pretty much I just didn't like do what I was supposed to do. Like pay attention to my schoolwork 'cuz I don't know. High school was such a big world and then I just started meeting people like click, click, click. And like I don't know. And people just leave me slack and then like ...I wouldn't go to class. I wouldn't do this and I'd visit people I'd like to be with and they were at different schools or I'd do something during class or something. And like [pause] I just didn't go to class. And I didn't get really kicked out. Well I got kicked out of [pause] a couple of classes and then I had the rest of them that I like make like a special appearance at every once and a while.*

Dress style is important in terms of aligning oneself with specific subjectivities and in complying with the expectations of the school authorities. As the school diary stated, "clothing should be adequate for modesty, and must not be decorated with images or lettering that would be offensive to students, staff, or the public." Dress style, therefore, articulates with popular culture to produce subjectivities and thus becomes an important site for representation of ideology–i.e. meaning in the name of power–as students cohere with or contest the various norms and values of schools and wider society. In terms of discipline, the school booklet indicates clear rules that students should follow in order to show respect for authority. As one student indicated in his narrative, this process of rule following can be difficult when the authority of the teacher is not recognised:

> Melvin: *I've got to put in like my info. If I don't put in my info, like then they are going to just keep on doing what they do. 'Cuz most of the time if you be like "Yeah, ok yeah" I end up in like an uncomfortable position where I am getting like even more angry. Because now [pause] I am moved to another table for something I didn't do, which is actually like saying to her [the teacher] "Heh! you just gave me a kick in my back side why don't you just do it again any time you feel like it." Instead I'm like "Hey look I am letting you know what I just did and I am putting down some ground rules because if you don't know you better recognise this next time.*

Similarly with the following student, a lack of respect for teachers can also result in "deviant" behaviour that challenges authority and discipline. In response to a question that asked him to identify what would make him respect a teacher, he replied:

> Gerald: *Teachers that would act like they are my friend . . . . They know they are there to teach you but at the same time they act like they are a friend to you . . . . They don't act like they are above you. Even though you know they are. That's why you respect them. When they act like they are a friend, you respect them. And that's why you will do what they say. But not when they like [pause] act like they have higher power to you. Tell you what to do, you have to take their orders. That's when I don't respect them.*

In those cases where rule following was severely problematic, resulting in harm to others or self, a school community-based police officer was on hand to give advice and assistance, as well as oversee crime prevention programs.

According to official educational policy, schools are neutral environments wherein the primary differences recognised are academic; differences in relation to race, class, or sexuality are not recognised. In some ways the latter is continuing the pattern set by founders of the education system, such as Egerton Ryerson, whereby the school was viewed as a place for common experiences; a common place where differences would be subsumed within an Anglo-dominant norm. Thus the school takes its mandate from Alberta Learning, whose primary understandings are based on a multicultural framework, whereby schools are designated as consisting of students of various ethnic identities. This understanding of ethnicity is based upon a "colour-blind" attitude where equality means that everyone is treated without recognition of differences. So it is that the racialised, gendered and sexualised discourses that students position themselves within are ignored[1] (Kelly, 1998).

Contrary to the dominant "colour-blind" discourse of many educators in the school system, these students' narratives also positioned them and others, at times, as racialised subjects. A few students alluded to demarcation of areas according to racialised groups:

> Etta: *Well like people consider that [pause] I guess in the Hexagon they have little corners which if you look you can see them. Especially like they have a large East Indian group. And [pause] the Orientals are never really in the Hexagon. 'Cuz they actually have basically their own hallway on that side of the school. They have what you call [laugh] Chinatown . . . the whole hallway is basically Oriental. You'll notice it. It's really easy to find. ...[pause] That doesn't bother me. Really. I guess it would intimidate you if you didn't know any one.*

Although these areas were marked and noted within the narratives, racialised boundaries were not perceived as being strictly policed, and several narratives allude to interaction taking place between different racialised groups. In positioning themselves as racialised subjects, they identified themselves as "black" and were, to varying degrees, conscious of blackness as a political category that could be mobilised and used to their advantage. Many of the students indicated that there had been a decrease in the number of black students attending the school, and with that decrease the dynamic within the black group had changed. The implication of the latter in terms of the students' school lives was that there was a decrease in the intra-group mixing, and in some ways group solidarity had been undermined. At issue also was the perceived attitude of the administrators who were regarded as "policing" black students' actions to such an extent that some students regarded one administrator as solely concerned with finding out "information" with regard to other black students.

As one student described the situation, the "black" group was seen as visible and implicated in trouble so that even if they were not responsible for some misdemeanour, it was assumed that they had knowledge of the circumstances:

> Phyllis: *um [pause] It's like they kind a pick the trouble groups out and they kind a separate you . . . . Like the black kids are known for trouble and that's what most goes on so teachers kind of listen in for the gossip and stuff like that. "I'll give you candy if you tell me about such and such."*

Or for the following student in reference to his interaction with administrators:

> Roy: *I stay far from them. [They] wanted me to tell on my friend, [they] invited me down to the office . . . don't really like it.*

Other student identities also come to the fore in the school environment so that the narratives reveal gendered, classed, ethnic, religious, and sexualised identities. The following student indicated how his religious identity intersects with the norm and values of some teachers. For him, the solution was a disciplining of the self, a situation reminiscent of what Foucault identifies as "technology of the self":

> Wayne: *Like everything that I am doing like there is always a biblical [pause] thing that come through. So I write all those things in my essay but I just, [pause] I don't, I have to like use my brain. I don't put too much because some of these teachers like, if they are not like a believer, some people don't like to hear you mention the word God to them or they feel upset or whatever, so. I don't want to put too much of that in case that teacher is that kind of person.*

The school day is broken down into two halves, morning and afternoon, with further demarcations into "periods" that last about one hour. Demarcation between morning and afternoon sessions is achieved via a period for lunch that lasts about an hour. To reinforce the idea of knowledge as fragmented, learning is contained within subject areas. The teaching that takes place is bounded within such time and subject constraints.

Curriculum is represented as neutral and is developed and controlled by Alberta Learning under the authority of the governing political party. Recently, Alberta Learning has made attempts to link its curriculum with other prairie provinces under the descriptor of Western Canadian Protocol. However, up until the period of data generation the curriculum, in the name of neutrality, does not present knowledge that would take account of and offer an understanding of the racialised, classed, and gendered identities of students. Among the narratives, the issue of curriculum and its lack of recognition of their racialised identity was evident. Below are examples of the students' narratives:

> Denzil: *Yeah. I asked him [a teacher]. "How come there is no black people in history?" He is like "Oh I don't know. I guess they didn't do anything." He said something along those lines. I was like [pause][look of amazement] there's got to be something. So I just started doing research and found out a whole bunch of things. Like, like [pause] the street light and all those things invented by a black person. Everything*

Or this student:

> Etta: *Oh Gosh. Not in school. [pause] They never really go through that stuff. They really don't have much of anything black in the curriculum at all. They don't even really consider it actually if you want the honest truth.*

This section of the chapter has presented an overview of the social context and structures of the school through the narratives of the students. This type of social analysis is useful in providing a sense of the ways in which the students regard the school and authority. The next section will analyse the historical representation of peoples of African descent in Alberta. Such an understanding will contextualise the circumstances for the reader and provide a background against which to read the narratives.

African Canadian Presence in Alberta

This section examines how peoples of African descent came to Alberta and counters narratives that indicate a lack of representation in the Canadian mosaic. Starting with the largest group of pioneers, this section charts the pattern of immigration for peoples of African descent coming to the province. This immigration occurred in three major waves: 1905-1911, from Oklahoma; late 1960s and 1970s, from the Caribbean; 1980s onwards, an increasing number of African students and refugees.

Over the period 1905-1912, various strategies were employed by the immigration authorities in order to discourage blacks from moving to the Canadian west from Oklahoma in the US.[2] Alberta was foremost among the provinces fighting to stem the flow of black immigrants. Official organisations in Edmonton, such as the Board of Trade and the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, gathered petitions of protest to send to Ottawa (Shepard, 1997). The reason for their disquiet was racism and a belief that blacks were unable to live peacefully together with whites. The dominant Anglo-Celtic groups viewed blacks as biologically unassimilateable.

Analysis of newspapers, government documents, magazines, and political meetings during this period of immigration reveal differing and competing racial discourses often intersecting with regional, gendered and political allegiances. The most consistent discourses drew on biological determinism and Social Darwinism to construct Anglo-Celtics as biologically different from and superior to blacks. Through these discourses, the dominant white group constructed blacks and whites as binary opposites. In this relation, whites were opposed to nature, while blacks, it was assumed, coincided with nature. Such a process naturalised and fixed differences between black and white by reducing the culture of black peoples to nature (Hall, 1997).

Such discursive practices played out through existing regionalised, classed, and gendered discourses. For example, addressing a "representative gathering" at the Conservative party club rooms in Edmonton, the following statement by Mr. Simmonds of Leduc highlights how some white inhabitants encoded "race" within existing regional animosities and as part of a general response to non-preferred immigrants i.e. Chinese, Hindu, and blacks. In contrast, the preferred group consisted of northern Europeans who were easily assimilateable, of hardier stock, and likely to thrive in Canada's northern climate. For Simmonds, immigration should reflect personal rights, and individuals should be able to choose who they live with. Under no circumstance did he want his province to become "Black Alberta" via a black invasion, and as such he blamed the eastern-based Liberal government for being out of touch with western sentiments:

> I can only see one way out of this difficulty . . . and this is to put the present government out of power and bring in one who will listen to our pleas . . . . Way down in Ottawa they do not think of the matter as seriously as we do, and therefore the interest is lacking. (cited in Shepard, 1976, p. 107)

Women were no less tainted with racism, and the Anglophile women's organisation Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire used arguments based on sexuality to protest black immigration and black male immigration in particular. Using stereotypes, black men were presented as a sexual threat to white women.

Although responses of the prairie provinces to immigration varied, this was more by degree than scale. Most provinces were against black immigration on principle, whether from the United States or from the Caribbean. In 1911, while the western boards of trade were petitioning the federal government to stop American blacks from taking up Canadian farms in Alberta and Saskatchewan, the *Montreal Herald* reported in rather militaristic tone that the 58 "dark-skinned" domestics from the Caribbean were considered the advance guard for others to follow.

Those black immigrants who made it into Alberta between 1907 and 1911 formed the core of the early black settlers[3]. Between 1901 and 1911, Alberta's population increased 5.5 times, from 73,000 in 1901 to 374,000 in 1911. The 1911 census placed the numbers of blacks residing in Edmonton and Calgary at 208 and 72 respectively These pioneers settled primarily into four isolated rural communities: Junkins (now Wildwood), Keystone (now Breton), Campsie near Barrhead, and Amber Valley, twenty miles from Athabasca (Carter, 1981). Populated by groups who had fled persecution in Oklahoma, Amber Valley was the longest-surviving Black community, with its own baseball team, its own school, and its own church—a self-contained community. Of all immigrants who took out homesteads from 1905-1930, 45 percent failed to complete the government conditions that would give them title (Palmer, p. 107). However, black immigrants faced added pressures. According to Thakur (1988) and Palmer (1990, p. 84), the reason for the failure of most of these communities was a lack of infrastructural development, isolation on marginal lands, and racial discrimination. Many of the settlers returned to Oklahoma. The rest resettled in Calgary or Edmonton, leaving only a few settlers on the pioneer homesteads. This group remained the dominant black group in the province until the second wave arrived.

Although the black settlers of Alberta arrived in Canada at a later period than other blacks in Ontario and Nova Scotia, they nonetheless faced similar prejudices and stereotypes. Common understandings of race as a biological "fact" and Social Darwinism were promoted in books, newspapers and magazines in order to question the suitability of blacks "to the development of the highest sort of citizenship in Canada." Discourses of race constructed blacks as antithetical to the budding capitalist environs that dominant groups in Canada wanted to cultivate. Using binarism, blacks were posited as opposite to the thriving, hardy, and self-reliant northern Europeans. Instead, they were perceived as "lacking," initiative with a "sense of humour and predisposition to a life of ease [that] render[s] his presence undesirable" (Cooke, 1911, p. 11). For black women, stereotypes were gendered and racialised, as concern was expressed about the ability of such "unsuitable" bodies to produce future potential citizens who did not conform to conceptions of the "Ultimate Canadian" bred of the "best stock that could be found in the world" (Cooke, 1911, p.11).

As in other regions in Canada, the experiences of Alberta's black pioneers differed according to whether they settled in urban or rural areas. For those who were segregated from mainstream Canadians in self-contained rural black communities, the harsh realities of discrimination were often muted, as long as they stayed within their communities. For town dwellers that had to interact with whites on an ongoing basis, racism and discrimination were much more of an everyday occurrence. However, political responses were still required. The Coloured Protective Association was formed in the early 1900s in Calgary in order to resist white racism. In the 1920s, organisations such as the Universal Negro Improvement Association were also active in the community, as was the Alberta Negro Colonisation and Settlement Society.

Testament to community activity during the 1920s and 1930s is seen in the regular *Edmonton Bulletin* column entitled "Our Negro Citizens." The cultural /social occasions advertised and commented on were often organised through members of the Shiloh Baptist Church. In the late 1950s, the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, who were active in organising the CPR Porters, translated their fight for human rights beyond their workplace into other areas of employment and housing. Their fight for human rights in Calgary resulted in blacks being able to access employment in the public sector. These cultural/social groups provided a means of getting together and expressing common concerns, a process which enabled the development of black identity formation and group consciousness. These groups encouraged a collective identity formation and enabled recognition that although they came from differing classed backgrounds, they had commonalities with regard to racism. As part of identity formation, a group comes to identify itself by differentiating itself from others. Organised initially through churches, these groups allowed blacks to assert a degree of social agency not readily available in the wider, white-dominated society. Within these organisations, women played a vital role in developing a sense of community. During the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of women could expect that only domestic and service work would be open to them. Thus black women were perceived as fitted to directed servile roles as good domestics, children's nurses, or servants.

This issue of gender and employment was highlighted by the next wave of immigration into Alberta during the late 1950s. These workers came directly from the Caribbean as domestic workers for white families. A forerunner to the present day live-in caregiver scheme, these women were regarded as cheap, expendable labour (Calliste, 1994). The economic exploitation of black women from the Caribbean who came to Alberta and Canada during the 1950s and 1960s as domestic workers illustrates the process of genderisation and racialisation of immigration policies. Ironically, the private sphere of middle-class white women became the complex public/private sphere of work for black women domestics. The gendered, racialised, and classed policies of the Canadian state reveal that black women were seen as workers located outside their own homes. Despite the problematic nature of the domestic scheme, some women were able to challenge their gendered/racialised oppression by using the scheme for their own fulfilment. Francine Govia (1987), on commenting on the domestic scheme argues that although exploitation was used in a variety of ways by women from the Caribbean:

> If Canada had hoped for a docile, passive group of unskilled women as domestic servants, it received quite a surprise. Educated women used the domestic scheme as the stepping stone into Canada. Less-educated women used the scheme as the stepping stone to an education and job. (p. 19)

Other groups of racialised women were mixed in terms of class and ethnicity. There was no automatic alignment between black and white women, and many white women were unable to recognise their part in oppression and the dominant ideologies that represented a woman's place as in the home. In contrast, oppression for black women was often multidimensional, with raced meanings operating through class, gender, and sexuality.

With the relaxation and opening up of the immigration laws in 1962, and again in 1967, the Alberta black population was increased with immigrants from the Caribbean Islands such as Trinidad. This group added to earlier groups who had come from Oklahoma as domestics. Having experienced two earlier waves of immigration from the United and States from the Caribbean, Alberta received an increasing number of blacks with the relaxation of the immigration laws.

Revisions of the *Immigration Act* that finally took place in 1962 and again in 1967 were prompted not by any major desire by government and immigration authorities to further develop a "racially" pluralist society, but rather one that was based primarily upon economic expediency. The federal government realised that Canada would not be able to rely on its traditional source for skilled immigrants, namely, Europe. In Alberta, this loosening of the immigration laws coincided with a demand for skilled oilfield workers. The latter was the impetus for the second large-scale immigration of peoples of African descent to Alberta. Many of these workers brought skills learned in the oilfields of Trinidad to the newly oil-rich province of Alberta. These workers from the Caribbean were later joined by students from the continent of Africa, anxious to make the most of an education at the University of Alberta. In the 1980s and 1990s, these groups of diasporan blacks were joined by blacks from the continent of Africa, fleeing war, or trying to make a better life for themselves and their children. According to 1996 census data, 24, 915 blacks live in Alberta. Allowing for variations in the figures, this would translate to approximately 2% of the population in both Edmonton and Calgary being black. Of the black population living in Edmonton, 4,280 were born in the Caribbean and Bermuda, while 6,620 were born in Africa (Black Women's Working Group, 2000; Statistics Canada, 1996; Torczyner, 1997).

This latest period of immigration was also marked by a political response of self-organisation. Cultural groups such as the Canadian Black Organisation (CBO), and the National Black Coalition (NBC), provided a link with their homeland for many new immigrants. In the 1990s, as part of the broader socio-political changes within the black community, the CBO changed its name to Council of Canadians of African and Caribbean Heritage (CCACH) and in so doing, indicated clearly its recognition of the diasporan sense of community. Thus CCACH offered a social/cultural space where the continent could meet its diaspora. Ironically, the influx of the newer immigrants from the Caribbean and the continent served to subsume the early African-Canadian pioneers. Because of the numerical dominance of this new wave and the lack of knowledge of an earlier black presence in Alberta, there was little attempt made to be inclusive and build the community. Blacks from the Caribbean were often regarded as the universal for all blacks. Some groups also organised social groups based on past nationality. Alongside the CBO, there were groups such as the Nigerian Association, Jamaican Association, and many others. These varying groups reflect the diversity within both the city and the descriptor "black."

The above historical overview situates the ways in which blackness can be understood in relation to the development of Alberta in the past century, because the way students understand themselves draws on this historical tradition. Student understandings are "contextualised social phenomena, they are produced, circulated and received within specific social-historical locations" (Thompson, 1990, p. 22). Furthermore, Canadian traditions are located within the colonial relations of British and American domination and dependency. To adequately identify these understandings today means highlighting the pervasive influence of the American media on adolescent culture, both in the way in which blackness is perceived within Alberta, and as it is positioned in relation to the global representations emanating from the US via Madison Avenue and Hollywood.

This diverse population, a result of differing immigration patterns, was reflected in the student sample for the research. The percentage of black students in the high school from which the research sample is taken is difficult to ascertain because the school board does not identify its students on the basis of race or ethnicity. However, a safe estimate would be that the black student population is below two percent. The 14 students interviewed and discussed within this study come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of ethnic origins, with nine students having one or both parents who emigrated from one of the countries of the Caribbean–Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and Guyana. Five students have an affiliation with one of the countries in Africa. Also significant within the group were students who might be described as being of "mixed origins." This concept of origins is, however, problematic because it implies a biological-racial self, thus reinforcing the concept of race. As a partial answer to this problem of classification, I have chosen to identify such students as having "mixed parentage," whether that be in terms of "race," ethnicity, or continents.

With the above contextual and conceptual concerns satisfied, the chapter now analyses students' narratives with regard to how they position themselves in relation to each other as Africans of the diaspora, and Canada as a nation. My central point will be to articulate the ways in which the students perceive themselves in relation to

Canadian nation and identity, family ancestry, and African continent homeland. Such a focus will then enable me to construct the ways in which the students relate to the Africa and its diaspora. The point of this chapter is to gain an understanding of the relationship and understanding of the diaspora and nationality.

African-Canadian Identity

While a wealth of literature exists on Canadian identity in terms of interethnic relations (Isijaw, 1999; Elliot & Fleras, 1992), this chapter dwells on the political and problematic construction of identity–especially in relation to the concepts of "nation" and belonging. Similarly, psychological literature that constructs black identity as fixed, with a unified sense of self (Clarke & Clarke, 1939; 1947) is not explored because I wanted to highlight and focus on theorisation that would allow for fluidity in identity formation. The starting point for this discussion is the link between the descriptors "African" and "Canadian" and the ways in which the students associate or disassociate themselves from the terms. Current North American theories categorise these students as African- Canadians in that at least one parent is of African descent. However, students do not necessarily comply with this categorisation. Many of the narratives indicate that there is slippage in terms of self-identification, with black appearing as a more consistent point of identification than "African" or "Canadian." In particular, I highlight the concept of nation in relation to the students' understanding of themselves as Canadians or other nationalities. The rationale for this emphasis is that at times blacks can be regarded as a nation. The emphasis on Canadian and African is a way of examining how the students place themselves in relation to other national identities. In using the concept of diaspora, I have the opportunity to examine the ways in which blackness is placed in relation to other identities, national and ethnic. Diasporan identity is a traditional identity, according to Hall:

> . . . diaspora offers a basis to reassess the idea of essential and absolute identity and offers a way to imagine a complex ecologically sophisticated and organic concept of identity than offered by contending options of genealogy. A diasporan identity is a transnational identity. (Woodward, 1997, p. 339)

The students see themselves in a myriad of ways in relation to Canada as a nation and Canadian as their identity: symbolic, continuous, translated, and contextual. In terms of symbolic continuity, the students perceive nationalism as based upon certain symbols that have a lasting effect through time. For some students, they are Canadian by virtue of place of birth, and therefore identification with an origin outside Canada is a bureaucratic procedure. For others, identification is strongly aligned with one or another parental country of origin. Therefore it is not surprising that overall, the students' narratives displayed differing and often-ambivalent orientations towards the adoption of African Canadian. For many, "Canadian" is a contested term, an identification not easily made, and one that connotes white subjectivity (Schick, 1995). Thus, it is difficult for those constructed within Canadian society as "non-white" and therefore "Other" to position themselves, with ease, as Canadians.

As a starting point for this data section, I highlight the links made by the students between identity, nation, ethnicity and belonging. In particular, I focus on the descriptors "African" and "Canadian" and the ways in which the students associate or disassociate themselves from these terms. This latter examination will then enable me to understand the ways in which a sense of belonging intersects and contours their identification with a national identity. Although in line with current North American theorisation I categorise the students as African-Canadians, in that at least one parent is of African descent, this is not necessarily a categorisation with which the students themselves comply. Many of the narratives indicate that there is a great deal of slippage in terms of self-identification, with black appearing as a more consistent point of identification than African or Canadian. In particular, I highlight the concept of nation in relation to the students' understanding of themselves as Canadians or other nationalities.

The students see themselves in a myriad of ways in relation to Canada as a nation and Canadian as their identity. For many, "Canadian" is a contested term, an identification not easily made, and one that connotes white subjectivity (Schick, 1995). Thus it is difficult for those constructed within Canadian society as "non-white" and therefore "Other" to position themselves, with ease, as Canadian. In terms of this construction of Canadian identity, Rinaldo Walcott (1997) argues that:

> the "textual accomplishment" of Canadian multicultural policy has been the main focus for addressing the ways in which the Other is imagined or not imagined in the Canadian nation-state. The multicultural narrative is constituted through a positioning of white Anglophone and Francophone Canadians as the founding peoples of the nation, with "special" reference to Native Canadians. All others exist and constitute the Canadian ethnic mix or multicultural character. Thus the colonising English and French are textually left intact as "real" Canadians while legislation is needed to imagine other folks as Canadian. (p. 79)

This emphasis on "real" Canadians is explored in this chapter. The chapter also examines the students' orientation to the concept of diaspora. How do they relate to each other as blacks, on what basis do they see themselves as unified, and on what basis do they make differentiation from each other. This examination of the ways in which they construct themselves as black helps to develop an analysis of how this sense of blackness relates to a sense of blackness constructed through the US media.

Canadian Identity as Symbolic Continuity

John Hartley (1994) argues that:

> "Nation" is a relational term; like any sign, one nation consists in being what the others are not. The concept belongs in fact to the realm of signification, not to any external referential world. Nations have no essential or intrinsic properties; each is a discursive construct whose identity consists in its difference from others. (1994, p. 196)

In this section of the thesis, I draw upon Hartley's definition to explore the students' narratives in relation to the various nations with which they can or cannot identify. In this way I can garner to what extent the students construct black identity as an "outernational project" rather than a singular construct contained by state boundaries (Gilroy, 1995).

The narratives suggest that constructions of the self in relation to Canadian identity are intertwined with meanings that draw upon questions of origins, belonging, "rootedness." This sense of rootedness, in particular, is aligned with perceptions of the Canadian nation and draws on history in order to construct and reconstruct certain symbolic representations. Such representations, based on historical presence in Canada, then allow some Canadians to position themselves more easily than others in relation to these symbols. So it is that distinctions can be made and differences marked symbolically between those who can be represented as fully Canadian and those who are perceived as "other than" Canadian.

The narratives highlight the way in which a discourse of historical continuity was also a factor in identifying who could lay claim to a Canadian identity. The following narrative illustrates the complexity of the discourses that construct the nation as historical continuity. In response to a question as to how easy it is to identify herself as Canadian, the following narrative emerged:

> Etta: *Everybody that's black is from somewhere. We don't originate from Canada I guess you could say. So that's what they, [people who ask] want to know. Especially for a fact in Canada . . . most parents weren't born here . . . I suppose in America people wouldn't ask that question very much, well I wonder? Because there have been generation, generations, of black people there. 'Cuz they had so many slaves there all along.*

The above narrative highlights the tensions and ambivalence in such discourses of historical continuity and the ways in which Etta recognises that although she identifies a sense of historical rootedness as equivalent to "belonging," such a correlation does not always occur. Thus her reference to the US as a place where peoples of African descent have resided for a long time and therefore have a "rootedness" is then undermined by her self-doubt as to whether such a question of belonging would be raised. Her query underlies the problematic nature of defining a sense of belonging based on historical sameness. Such a reading constructs the concepts of African and Canadian as binary opposites, so that one can be "either" "or" rather than both. Using the analogy of them/us enables a distinction to be made between Canada and the United States. As such, blacks are perceived as "rooted" in terms of the length of period they have been in the United States, while in Canada it is a claim that some participants suggest cannot be made on behalf of those from either the continent of Africa or its diaspora.

For Denzil, this "rootedness," represented via historical symbols, negates any presence of African or black within the descriptor Canadian:

> Denzil: *I don't see much of a black Canadian so much. 'Cuz if you say Canadian? [pause] What pops to mind if you say Canadian? Its like Canadian [deep voice], you see lumberjacks and beavers [pause] and canoes and igloos and stuff. Like that's what pops to mind when you hear [the word] Canadian. There is no real black Canadian. I guess*

So it is that Denzil's account of Canadian identity as rooted in historical symbols supports an understanding of "culture as a homogening, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37). As well, such a positioning reinforces a perspective that the nation is constructed from a historical sameness and continuity–continuity constituted and reinforced by forgetfulness of a hybrid past.

This lack of symbolic representation of a black/African presence in representations of Canadian identity plays out in complex forms of identification within the narratives. A lack of concrete symbols such as dress, music, food or historical association makes it problematic for black students to take on a Canadian identity. Also noticeable within the narratives is how adoption of an African-Canadian identity is not undertaken in isolation but is often adopted or rejected in relation to other identities that might be available. The narratives imply that it is more difficult to adopt an identity that is abstract when faced with the pressure and allure of an identity that is aligned with more concrete symbols. For one student whose heritage included Africans with a long heritage in Canada, as well as Africans more recently from the continent, the importance of the relational in shaping meaning was evident in terms of identity formation. For her, the appeal of the concrete symbols associated with parental heritage from an African country is heightened when compared to the muted nature of black representation among symbols identified with the descriptor Canadian. Thus, despite being proud of long family associations with Canada, the symbolic contouring within the family and within Canadian society in general encouraged a stronger identification with parental heritage on the continent:

> Merle: *I just usually say I'm half-African, half-Ghanaian, half like black Canadian. Like there is more things, like for example clothes and stuff, my . . . [family] has lots of Ghanaian clothes at our house. But then you can't really say like what's black Canadian . . . so you kind of like go towards . . . [the African]. But I still acknowledge that my . . . black Canadian [side].*

However, this problematic identification with Canada was not a uniform positioning for all the students. For Euda, such identification with Canadian identity was made possible through a discourse of multiculturalism that stresses the present rather than history–a possible basis of claim to a Canadian identity. So in response to a question as to self-description the response was:

> Jeannette: *Canadian because . . . the whole Canadian thing is multicultural*
> J: *What is a Canadian?*
> Jeannette: *It's a lot of things, white people aren't just Canadian it's any body who lives here because it's multicultural.*

Experience as Translation

While the narratives identify the adoption of Canadian identity as problematic and not the source of easy identification, so too is the adoption of an African identity problematic. Experience emerges as an important aspect of the way in which diasporan students come to view themselves in relation to the continent of Africa. For students with Caribbean heritage, the narratives suggest that there is no ability to return to Africa, the "source of origins." This problemating of a "return" is similar to a process identified by Homi Bhabha as "translation," an exploration of identities as transformative processes in the interplay of history and politics. For Wayne, recognition of his diasporan experiences means that there is no simple identification with African origins. Instead, he viewed himself as:

> *Black Jamaican. [laugh] I know that my fore-parents are from Africa, but I am a black Jamaican. My mom wasn't born in Africa, my dad wasn't born in Africa. I was born in Jamaica. So I know that my origins come from Africa. But I am a Jamaican black [pause] Caribbean Black.*

What Wayne identifies is a discourse that recognes his past yet does not see an easy return to that past. As such, his origins on the continent are subsumed under his reflections on Jamaica, his last "port of call." In this context translation means:

> . . . those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers and which are composed of people who have been dispersed forever from their homelands. Such people retain strong links with their places of origin and their traditions, but they are without the illusion of a return to the past. They bear upon them the traces of the particular cultures, traditions, languages and histories by which they were shaped. The difference is that they are not and never will be unified in the old sense, because they are irrevocably the product of several interlocking histories and cultures. (Hall, 1992, p. 310)

In a similar vein, the following student identified the problematic nature of "translation" and the difficulties of a straightforward identification with geographic area. For Doreen, length of stay/rootedness outweighs identifications. It is difficult to identify with a memory and a past Africa and yet also difficult to identify a Canadian present:

> Doreen: *Oh if people call me African I am like, "Oh I'm from [St. Lucia]" . . . I don't like to say Canada. It's just a habit. And everybody always thinks you are from somewhere else too.*

As with Doreen, Etta also indicates how the process of "translation" affects her ability to adopt the subject position of African. Again, the US is drawn on as a counter position to explain the ways in which blackness is codified with rootedness:

> Etta: *That they are basically American, but they are black. If you got as far back as your descendants. If you go back and back and back. They are still American. And if you go really, really, far back, then you will get African. Whereas with me, how would you put it. You don't really consider yourself to be African if you have somebody that's from the West Indies.*

What Etta is alluding to is the difference that results from a process of translation.

This process of translation is evident in the students' narratives that highlight the ways in which ethnicity articulates with relations of power to highlight specific cultural differences within the black-identified group. This issue was evident in several references to intragroup differences that are smoothed over with humour and jokes:

> J: *When you say it sometimes comes up as a joke. Explain that to me.*
> Gerald: *Like [pause] like my group. Say like there's Africans and say there is Jamaicans and then there is like Africans, [they] like to make fun of each other.*

> J: *In what way?*
> Gerald: *Like each other's countries. Make fun of Africa and then they'll make fun of Jamaica.*

Or in a similar vein:

> Omar: *It's like, well I don't know? Like to all the black people. I think inside they reale that that's where they are. That's where like all their roots are. Whether you are Jamaican whatever you are. That's where your roots are. That's, I think some Jamaicans fail to realise that. /Fail? / Yeah. 'Cuz they always want to distance themselves from Africans.*
> J: *How do you see that?*
> Omar: *Well, [pause] phew, lot times. Like when we had, even if it's for fun, for jokes. Like I have a lot of Jamaican friends. And you get into these discussions where you start making fun of each other's cultures. Like, "Oh yeah you Jamaicans are always fishing." "You Africans are always hunting and this and that" And so you like, you fail to reale that you are both the same! That [the] only difference between you two is what part of the world you are standing on.*

Omar's narrative highlights the unity of blackness that is again based on the concept of historical origins, a consciousness that is ahistorical and pan-Africanist.

Although Omar's narratives attempt to negate the process of translation and differences in order to achieve a sense of political unity based on biology, this notion of unity soon becomes problematic for students who declare themselves as black but who are of mixed heritage, African and European. The following narratives indicate the problematic nature of a return to Africa for children with a hybrid identity, for them there is no automatic return and acceptance waiting on the continent. Saaka relays his initial reception on the continent:

> Saaka: *I'd get teased a lot 'cuz . . . they knew I was different. All they had to do was hear me talk and to look at my skin, it was lighter than theirs so they knew I was different. I'd get teased a lot. Also at the same time lot of people could see I was different and want to be my friend. But then lots of kids would bug me too.*

Or this student, who also returned to Africa:

> Nelson: *And they always call me foreigner and stuff like that and I was like, I didn't know what it meant at first. I asked them [adults], they are like, "It means foreigner, don't worry about it" and I go "Yes" [they said] "They are little kids, they don't know." But . . .[pause] everyone was good to me there. They were all very nice to me. Like the family name there is big.*

Adopting African as a general descriptor for those from the continent and those translated by the diaspora was problematic for one participant. For this student, peoples of African descent are complicit in homogenising Africa when such a descriptor is used too freely. For him, one should identify a specific country where one's heritage lies:

> Saaka: *I don't like when people say . . . they are African. "What country in Africa are you from?" When people ask me if I am African I go no I am Chadian. They ask, "Where is that?" "Africa" they go "Oooh." No one knows anything about Africa because it's never taught. [It] is the biggest country in Africa and no one can find it on a map. It's like Americans {laugh} Americans don't know anything about Canada.*

The latter narrative highlights the ways in which one can align one's self with discourses of subjugation through one's unwitting use of language. The narratives illustrate the ways in which peoples of African descent can also come to use and reinforce discourses that homogenise Africa and represent it as a country rather than a continent with a variety of cultures.

Context and Identity

In a similar vein, the following extracts highlight the ways in which the discourses of identity change according to the context and the raced subject positions of the participants. For this student, identification is managed and performed[4]:

> J: *Do you see yourself as African or Canadian, or . . . West Indian, or Caribbean?*
>
> Etta: *What do I identify with the most? /Yeah/ Well first thing that pops into my head I guess must be I feel more like [Martinquane]. When I am here in Canada,I feel that I am [Martinique] than any thing else. To me if I am Canadian I identify with [pause] to me like identify with like white people. /right/ But if I am in [Martinique] now [pause] I am Canadian. That's how it is. 'Cuz they know that I am not from there. They know what family I'm from whatever. But I am born in Canada so I am Canadian. And for me it is a little different, because technically I am half-African . . . . But maybe I am biased with the whole thing. I do not see myself as an African.*

For this same student the situation is not straightforward. It involves a process of self-reflection and, to some extent, double-consciousness as she reads the social situation to take account of the perceptions that the other person has:

> J: *You wouldn't call yourself a Canadian?*
> Etta: *Not here I don't suppose. Well I always go . . . . 'Cuz I am born here so I don't want to lead anyone [on]. Usually I say I am born here. But obviously my mum's from [the Caribbean]. 'Cuz usually . . . that's what people are asking. I figured that out. 'Cuz they don't expect [pause] to hear that you are Canadian. They just know what they want to hear. Like whether you are born here or not. I've learnt that. 'Cuz some people always ask you. If I say, "Oh I am Canadian?" they will say "oh well where are your parents from. Or something like that. They ask you a further question. So I usually always put in a one sentence. Depending on who it is.*
> J: *Who is it?*
> Etta: *It depends I guess like [pause] I don't know. If a white person ask me normally I'd say [pause] 'Cuz I guess normally I do say I am [Caribbean]. 'Cuz Canadian to them [pause] most of them don't understand what that means. But to a black person especially if they are not from here. I usually tell them I am born here but where my mum's from 'cuz that's what they want to know.*

Context and ethnicity of the audience can modify this complex process of identification and negotiating of a descriptor. Thus, the need for collective identity and fragmentation of identity varies according to social situation. Euda's narratives below indicate when fragmentation of collective might be necessary and when she would not necessarily call herself black:

Euda: *If I was with a whole load of black people I would then become a [Barbadian]*

These narratives also reveal a problematic positioning resulting in specific discursive practices that Foucault identifies as "technologies of the self." This intertextual reading of identity and what it means to be Canadian in some ways supports a more open-ended pluralist definition of identity; one that changes according to context, a reflection of the intersubjective nature of interaction and identity:

> Wayne: *There are variations in all different kind of things. Like all different walks of life. 'Cuz the Caribbean blacks or the American blacks, Canadian blacks, they are in a sense different from the African blacks. If you look at their skin, their skin is much kind of darker.*

Thus, the above section of the chapter ascertains that context is important in determining whether the students construct black identity as an "outernational project" or not. At times they regard black identity as a singular construct contained by state boundaries. At other times they do not (Gilroy, 1995).

Relational Understanding and Meanings of Blackness–A Slippage Between US and Canada

This lack of African-Canadian symbols becomes an important factor when placed in relation to the media definitions of African American that the students were exposed to. The narratives indicate that the proximity of the US to Canada, and the plethora of images of blackness that emanate from the US, come to play a part in the ability of the students to define themselves Canadian. Thus African American was perceived by some students as an identification that was as relevant to their sense of self as that of African Canadian.

Often everyday meanings develop in relation to other cultural formations. As such, the narratives often drew on the US in terms of defining the meanings and representations of blackness and black identity that exist in Canadian society. For Denzil, the proximity of the United States resulted in some leakage of US-defined "black" culture into what could be defined as black Canadian. At times this leakage comes to define other perceived black cultural formations as subordinate to that of the US. Speaking about the influence of the country from which his family originated on the continent, Denzil suggests that it offers little in terms of understanding the meanings associated with blackness in Canada:

> J: *Are there things about your Mum's culture that you bring to being black?*
> Denzil: *There's nothing about the culture. 'Cuz being black quote, unquote is being black American*
> J: *So is there a black-Canadian identity then?*
> Denzil: *No, er [pause] When you say African American it encompasses like black people in North America.*

However, in putting this latter perspective to Melvin, another student, a different response was garnered. For him, there is a clear distinction drawn between African-American and African-Canadian identity, with representations of Canadian blackness being identified as more syncretic. In addition, Melvin calls on culture to reinforce the multicultural discourse dominant in Canada to both understand meanings surrounding culture and to differentiate Canadian culture from the US. For him, it is the ability to mix with students from other racialised groups and the consequent construction of syncretic cultures that provides the "difference from" the US:

> J: *What would you think if someone said to you, "Well there isn't an African-Canadian culture" . . . and that what we have here in Canada is African-American culture."*
> Melvin: *Oh no, no. Well it's just like there is like [pause] Canadian and American and it's all different. And people learn differently from different environments. And that's how you like mould and shape like the culture . . . in different places. Because*

> *you are going to react to different stuff different ways. 'Cuz I am sure that I wouldn't even be the same person if I lived down in the States.*
> J: *You don't think so?*
> Melvin: *No. My mentality would probably be different especially if I was like meeting different people through the schools . . . like being black [pause] . . . 'Cuz I know people from the States that just like . . . used to just chill like with pure black people . . . . Well I am not saying I didn't do that before, [in school] but like I like still did chill with whoever. But then they used to like "cuss off" like other races too and they would always be like stuff going off against them. And like here I still like . . . go through and do whatever with every race. And they kind a like single themselves out that way.*

While another student, Gerald, agrees that there is a slippage between the signifiers African American and African Canadian, his narrative also goes on to specify that this slippage is primarily around youth culture:

> *I can't. I can't really explain it. It's just like there is no, [pause] to me I've never seen any thing that's like African Canadian. Like everything that black kids identify with [pause] that I know about is like African American. Like rap is African American, all the movies you watch are African American movies, clothes you wear, [the] styles are African America. Everything is like American*

Thus, Gerald's identification with blackness is primarily through youth culture; a youth culture that is linked to the US. His recognition of youth culture as an important part of black identity is in line with recent theorisation of black youth culture. Although the identification of students as black would appear to be a generic descriptor, the narratives indicate that the conception of black identity under discussion within the thesis is specifically a youth identity. This latter point was also evident in the way that Gerald constructs blackness as related to dress style and youth culture:

> J: *So give me an example of someone who you think dresses black? On the media or somebody that you know?*
> Gerald: *All the black people except for people like old men. Like Denzil Washington. I always see him in suits and stuff, like basically anyone else, see Snoop,* [pointing to The Source cover page on the table] *that's dressing black.*

Or, the ways in which this young man asks me to elaborate and differentiate in terms of who I am referring to when I speak of black culture.

> Melvin: *It all depends. Like [pause] . . . you mean black people as a whole? Or different age groups, or*
> J: *Oh right . . . . You would make a distinction then? Age groups then? The culture would be different for the youth rather than the . . .*
> Melvin: *Yeah because . . . still when you are like young you are not like down into nothing like deeper in life. So you just like go with like the things that everybody is*

> *into and stuff . . . that make the things that black people are into. Like we talk the same and like you know listen to our music and what not and "do our thing." And like I am sure when you get like older it like comes more visible that there is like different symbols and like different things that like represent [pause] your black culture. But like, um, its not really recognised to me at this moment. So I'm still digging deeper into life. Like I've just begun.*

Also evident within Melvin's narratives is how black identity is not an innate state of being but rather a social process of becoming, which is heavily influenced by peers. He represents himself as "youth" on the way to adopting a differing "black adult" identity based on differing meanings and symbols. The construction of identity indicated by the narratives is one that is open to change as one moves through adolescence and draws primarily on US-based youth culture. This construction of black identity through youth culture is the focus of analysis in chapters four and five of this thesis.

Of relevance in both Gerald and Melvin's narratives is the way that the narratives construct not just African-American identity as similar to African-Canadian, but specifically African-American youth identity. These similarities are recogned and weighted as part of a yearning for African-American youth styles. In linking the two descriptors with regard to black identity, it becomes evident that similarities between the two are based on consumption of specific youth style. Media culture, music and style in particular are identified as important markers of black identity. Frank's narratives give clarification of how he sees these two identities of black American and black Canadian as fluid in relation to each other:

> Frank: *They like try to do the same things. Everybody wants to do what other people do. Like "rappers do this" then everybody wants to do this. It's like [pause] want to listen to rap music and stuff like that.*

What is evident from the above presentation of student narratives is not only that African-American youth culture is aligned with African-Canadian youth culture, but also the way in which some use black interchangeably with African American and African Canadian. "Black" is used in a way that makes the term interchangeable between those whose heritages are in differing geographic areas, and reinforces slippage between signifiers African Canadian and African American. The point of constancy that links these differing geographic areas would seem to be a conception of black identity that is linked with phenotype and age and a trace of historical memory as much as any thing else. Substantiation of my postulation can be found in the following extract that self-evidently defines hip-hop as a black cultural form:

> Gerald: *'Cuz basically it's made up of black people!*

Chapter Summary

This chapter has highlighted the students' narratives in relation to sense of belonging in relation to Canada and the African diaspora. The narratives indicate that the students position themselves in terms of national identity as well as a black cultural identity. Context is important in terms of deciding which identity to highlight. However, this does not mean that their identities are free-floating and totally decentred. Instead, the context affects which of their identities comes to the fore. Many of the students view Canadian identity as linked with a sense of historical continuity. This highlighting of history is used to code Canadian identity with specific symbols. These symbols are then available for the students to align themselves with. In terms of a sense of belonging to the diaspora, many students indicate a black identity that crosses, to some extent, national borders. There is limited unity in position, since various points of fragmentation occur. In relation to the continent of Africa, many students relay a process of translation whereby although they recogne Africa as the site of their "origins," many, especially those with strong links to the Caribbean, do not see it as a point of return. Often the "last port of call" is the point of return.

In the next chapter, I continue with an indirect examination of the ways in which the students orient themselves to the African diaspora. More directly, I lay out the common sites of identification that the students construct through their narratives. Such an emphasis in the chapter allows me to garner an understanding of how these youths perceive themselves in relation to their diasporan peers. Thus, I should be able to identify the extent to which the diaspora is a viable concept in describing their experiences. As well, the chapter highlights how music is used by some of the students to differentiate themselves from others.

Notes

---

[1] In a recent document produced by the Western Canadian Protocol committee for social studies it was noticeable that while the document highlighted Charter groups such as Francophone and Anglophone, alongside Aboriginal students there was an erasure of racialised/ethnic identities under "Other." No mention was made as to the complex identity formation that students experience.

[2] The pioneers came as part of attempts to settle the West with immigrants from USA, UK and Eastern Europe.

[3] [See Alberta: A New History by Howard Palmer (1990, p. 78) Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers].

[4] This idea of identity as performance is not new, and here I draw on Judith Butler's work on sexual identity, wherein she suggests that gender identity is a performance—"constituting an identity, the identity that it is purported to be." (Butler, 1990, p.25).

Chapter 5

Diaspora: A Collectivity

Consciousness of diaspora affiliation stands opposed to the distinctively modern structures and modes of power orchestrated by the institutional complexity of nation-states. Diaspora identification exists outside of, and sometimes in opposition to, the political forms and codes of modern citizenship. (Gilroy, 1997, p. 329)

Introduction

This chapter will examine the ways in which the students regard themselves as similar to and different from other blacks. Through the students' discourse, their common sites of identification will be ascertained. As such their narratives highlight racialised experiences, and historical memory. In particular, musical choice is examined as a resource for the production of symbolic meanings that are then used to produce or contest relations of dominance.

Having seen the way in which the students view African-Canadian identity as problematic, we can now look again at the narratives and examine the ways in which a sense of "sameness" gets played out in their everyday culture. By culture I mean Raymond Williams' sense of "culture as ordinary" and everyday. In other words, what is it within their everyday lives that the students construct as a site for common identification–a commonness that moves beyond phenotype, yet still allows them to refer to themselves as black. In examining this concept of "identification" more closely, we can note Kathryn Woodward's (1997) postulation that it describes the process of identifying with others, either through lack of awareness of difference or separation" (p. 14). My examination is within a framework that can be identified as cultural politics, an attempt to recognise that culture operates within a political framework.

Common Sites of Identification

The comment by Gerald at the end of chapter four indicates that the colour of peoples designated as black is important in terms of being able to claim black identification. The body acts as a signifier to connote specific meanings as embodiment becomes linked to the ways in which boundaries are created around sameness. The narratives indicate that phenotype is an automatic signifier for blackness. Gilroy (1997) describes the rationale for such a state as:

> where separation, time and distance from the point of origin or the centre of sovereignty complicate the symbolism of ethnic and national reproduction, anxieties over the boundaries and limits of sameness may lead people to seek security in the sanctity of embodied difference. (p. 333)

Other narratives also highlight the problematic nature of defining black identity with phenotype. At times, the ability to be seen as black was not as straightforward as suggested by the body but was complicated by cultural understandings as well as lived experiences within a geographic region identified with blacks. The narratives reveal that at times, individuals were able to fragment the sense of blackness as based solely on skin colour:

> Omar*: Oh even like, I consider like there is these two brothers they are from Guyana. I consider them black. They look more brown. They speak [patois] things like that I consider them black.*

Because of their cultural expressions derived from the Caribbean, those students whose heritage was on the Indian subcontinent via the Caribbean, the brothers were classified as black despite their phenotypic appearance.

So how do the students' narratives construct students whose physical attributes might not cohere with a common-sense understanding of a black, yet are of African descent? For some students who have mixed heritage–one parent with European origins–passing/being accepted as black was not always automatic but was instead dependant on the extent to which their phenotype cohered with other dominant signifiers of blackness. If they did not look like the dominant representation of blackness, then their claim to being "black might well have to be legitimated. One student who was of mixed heritage and whose appearance did not cohere with the predetermined conceptions of "black" indicated how he negotiated this social situation when interacting with a new group of black students:

> J: *So how do you stake your claim then?*
> Bob: *I don't, really. I just wait [they say] "You're black" "Oh" I'll go "My dad is." "Oh, Okay."*

For Bob it, was a matter of waiting to be challenged and then laying out one's African heritage. His basis of legitimation is bio-political, based on his father's African heritage.

Within other students' narratives, discourses on mixed-heritage students constructed various formulations that drew on gender and parenting to identify the degree to which a mixed heritage student might identify with blackness. For Etta, the gender of the black-identified parent was a decisive factor in determining a child's psychological orientation towards a black self. She describes how this process worked with a friend:

> Etta: *I know she is half by her skin colour, but I always thought of her as being black. Because her mum is ... totally [Caribbean]. That's how she is raised, and you can even see the attitude in her. Like just the way she is. And like sometimes, like a lot of half people they turn out to be perfectly fine, not a problem, you know. They have no problem with like who they are whatever. But a lot of cases they do have a problem. They don't know who to identify [with]. And I see that most if the guy is black and the mum is white.*

However, the narratives of another student, Phyllis, who argued that the influence of her non-black mother was also important in enabling her to identify herself as black, indicated the problemtic nature of Etta's comments:

> Phyllis: *I paid attention to more of the black side. My mum has always kind a pushed me to the black side //Right// Like she likes the fact that I acknowledge my white half I don't like [pause]; exclude her from anything you know. Like if anything I excluded it wouldn't be my mum.*

As well, embedded within Etta's narrative is an assumption that the mother is the primary caregiver and therefore more influential in terms of the acquisition of a sense of self. Such a view reinforces the idea that the transmission of culture is unproblematic. Little account is taken of the ways in which enculturation/socialisation is neither automatic nor predetermined but is, instead, intersected by relations of class, ethnicity and religion.

Cross-racial Relations

The literature on identity indicates that as part of maintaining a boundary, cross-racial dating is often perceived as taboo, as muddling the binary opposite black/white. Many of the students indicated that they did not have any concerns about either themselves or others dating across racialised groups. This may have been a reflection of the number of students who were of mixed heritage, as one such student indicated:

> J: *What about tensions? Does that ever create tensions between different ethnic groups?*
> Denzil: *Not really. [pause] Only the really ignorant kind of . . . stupid people "What are you doing?" like that. It's sooo backward. "What are you doing with that white girl?" "What are you doing with that Chinese girl"*

However, such an acceptance of cross-racial dating was not unanimous among the whole student population as indicated by the following narrative from the wider sample of students interviewed:

> Marcus: *I am not bothered about dating them. But when it comes down to like seriousness, like the rest of my life, having a kid I have to take care of, then that's different . . . I'll go for a black girl.*
> J: *How is that?*
> Marcus: *I can't see my self with a half-kid, straight curly hair, light complexion. Can't see myself like that. Get up in the morning, with a white face beside me, can't see that.*

Marcus's narrative indicates that the positive response of other students to my questions might well have been with regard to "dating" specifically rather than a long-term relationship. Despite claims that neither genders were concerned about cross-racial dating the young women indicated that if they did have a relationship across racialised groups, it would be noted and remarked upon by males. Males in return also indicated that girls were sensitive on such issues. What emerges is the way in which, in terms of gender, relations of both the young women and young men construct women in racialised ways that reinforce stereotypes of black women as "tough" and independent-minded, while white women are seen as "soft" and easily manipulated. The latter narratives are evident of one young woman's positioning within such discourses:

> Euda: *Black girls don't take it . . .we speak our minds all the time.*

Often this comparison is constructed in relation to other racialised groups of women. The following narrative reveals such genderised/racialised discourses at work:

> Doreen: *As far as I am concerned girls that are not black spoil [them], girls from other races put out for black guys and then they expect to get stuff from us whenever they come back. Like they want every single thing, they want to buy them. And like listen, I am not one of those girls that go out and . . . .*

Or for another student:

> Eulyn: *Well I'll tell you my perspective instead . . . . They are um [pause] well they're kind a dumb, right. In the sense that they will do anything //uumph// for a guy right. And [pause] I don't know. It's hard to describe.*

What the latter does is to construct non-black women as passive, dumb/innocent, naïve, and in some ways hyperfeminine. If one places this construction of non-black women in a binary relation, then black women emerge as assertive and street smart. Such racialised constructions of gender can also affect the ways in which young men represent themselves and young women as dating partners:

> Marcus: *'Cuz most white girls are too easy to control . . . do whatever you tell them . . . black girl she will stand up for herself . . . she will not let anyone walk over her she just takes charge.*

Such an assessment of potential dating partners is an interesting one. Young men living in a patriarchal society with a preference for women who are perceived as "independent-minded," able to take charge–attributes not traditionally identified with the hyper-masculinity that they encounter in youth culture, is unexpected.

The narratives indicate that although the majority of the students exhibited a willingness to identify themselves as black, finding common signifiers of black identification and its representation in common everyday practices was often problematic. While one student was able to identify symbols as a common source of identification, naming such symbols proved illusive:

> Melvin: *Black culture? //Uh huh// As in how black people like [pause] have like [pause] symbols that like would mean it's their culture? //Yeah// Ah yeah. I'm pretty sure. Yeah. What symbols it would be though I don't know.*

Another student's narrative implied an identity that is ascribed as much as achieved; a black identity that is determined and constructed by bureaucratic descriptors that are seemingly imposed externally upon the self and without choice. In response to my question, "What does it mean to you to be black?":

> Gerald: *It's the way society looks at you, not what you think of yourself. [pause]. That's how I see someone being black. If society thinks you are black then you are black. You don't have a choice.*

Gerald's comments indicate there is a bureaucratic/political element that acts as a coercing influence in the construction of ethnic and racialised identity. The latter is similar to Isajiw's (1999) concept of "double boundaries," "those from within and those from without, self-identifying and being identified by others" (p. 176). In the present it is difficult to escape such categorisations, as the state increasingly comes to recognise "needs" on the basis of identities and social identities become more political (Gilroy, 1987).

This recognition of black identity as constrained by political and bureaucratic practices, can also be seen in Omar's narratives:

> Omar: *The easiest way to say is the thing that separates itself from everybody else. 'Cuz I think that's what the black people are trying to do. As much as all the black people are saying Oh how we want equal rights. They really want to be separated*

> *from everybody else. They don't like it when other people are like, how you say [pause] like doing the same thing as they are . . . . That's basically it. It's like what the French people are doing almost.*
>
> J: *Oh you think so?*
>
> Omar: *Yeah, well almost. It's not to the point where it's political. But almost.*

For Omar, black identity connects people through a desire on the part of blacks to be separate from others, a desire orchestrated through music and language. Part of this desire to be separate is based on an understanding of culture as property and a social resource. Such an understanding of culture leads to a fear of any sharing that might dilute and consequently weaken culture as a resource. By inviting others to participate in one's culture, one also opens up the possibility of a social rejection: a rejection on the basis of being too strange and exotic. Etta alludes to such a situation at another high school that she attended. There, the construction of a white norm in terms of the students attending meant that other racialised students were thus constructed as "other than" the norm. She explains her reluctance to share aspects of black culture such as stepping:

> Etta: *And it's kind a like you feel kind a [pause] not ashamed, but like no one is going to appreciate, anyways 'cuz there is nobody there. [pause] That's your kind or whatever. Like here it doesn't really matter. 'Cuz everybody appreciates everything. So there is so many of everybody else. You are already part of. There it's like [pause] it's almost all the same kind of show. And if something else different comes across. Everyone is like "Oh?" Because the majority is white any ways.*

Omar articulates a similar point with regard to sharing black culture and experiences in general:

> *Like sometimes [pause] you are afraid of what the other, the outsider is going to say about it. So you don't want any body to have a big image of what you believe in. So you just kind a distance it from other people. You know the type of thing like that. But you always want them to like it. So in a sense you want them to learn about it but you don't want them to have a negative thought about it. So it's like. I don't know [pause] That's all I can really say. Like you just don't, you don't [pause] it's like your shelter. You don't want people to like look at it and say, "What is this! This is rubbish. You want them to say, "Yeah that's good. I never knew."*

Thus external, social factors, as well as internal psycho-social factors, construct black identity.

Historical Memory and Knowledge

At times the students' identities become linked with a sense of historical memory and knowledge as a means towards developing a sense of black collectivity. One student made use of historical memory in order to suggest a unity in origins that is often not recognised by those born in the diaspora and from which they often try to distance themselves. For Omar, recognition of the Continent was a matter of respect:

> *It's kind of like Africa is [pause] it's where its' like most, like some people they realise that's their true roots. And then some people maybe do realise it but just distance themselves from it. Because I guess like the technology is not great. Like, for materialistic things, nothing like cultural or anything like that it's just materialistic. They say, "Oh 'cuz like Africa is not in the twentieth century yet." They have most of the Third World nations in on there, stuff like that. So people don't want to put themselves in the same class as that. See they want to distance themselves. They're "Oh in Jamaica we can get these Nike things or that. You can't get that in Africa. "Oh fine" "Who cares? "You're from there!" Your ancestors were born there at one point in time." So, I don't know. People [pause] just don't . . . appreciate the Land [Africa] as much as they should I would think. Even me, I sometimes don't.*

In other words, the development of technology and, through it, access to commodities becomes a marker of "progress" within the worldwide economic hierarchy, in which the continent of Africa ranks low. Another student, Langston, did not share this perspective of historical memory as unifying; instead, he used historical memory of slavery to reveal differences in the experiences of those who were enslaved and those who remained on the continent. Further, in recognising such differences and comparing the African diaspora as the dislocation, he finds the knowledge of and about the continent more interesting:

> Langston: *Like I know about black American history, like I know everything basically, but it's like I come from a much more interesting view. Like way more interesting. Like African history is pretty interesting, like very interesting. Like the slave ships and bringing from Africa to America where they worked as slaves until so, so, date. Lincoln freed them and there was a civil war. I know all that. But where they came from? The stories behind them are really interesting. They have folk tales. I would have liked to live way back in those times.*

Or for Eulyn, this past has an effect on the present:

> *Because when we were slaves, back in the day. I mean, the stuff that they put us through and then to say "Well it's Okay you know. It's the past whatever don't worry about" and it's kind of annoying.*

In another instance, historical memory and knowledge of black experiences becomes an important resource in the formation of black subjectivity and identity:

> Denzil: *That's a common link in every black person. They feel. They feel for their slaves. They feel for everyone who fought for the civil rights and everything*
> J: *So even though you haven't experienced it you still feel for them?*
> Denzil: *Right. 'Cuz without them, where would I be right now? I would probably be picking corn. Picking cotton or something.*

In continuing the narrative, he indicates the importance of parental influence, rather than biological essence in cultivating this sense of historical memory, black identification, and black consciousness.

> J: *So how do you gain that understanding then?*
> Denzil: *My dad, my father really put into my head. He drilled it into my head. I was young, but. I did a lot of research on my own, on black history [or] whatever.*

This idea of blackness as historical consciousness that leads to separation was also evident in the narratives of some students involved in a step team[1] based at the school. For these students, historical memory in conjunction with present-day racialised bodies were linked in order to become a source of power, to exclude those who were regarded as not being the bearers of such traces of racialised memories. At times, historical discourses are drawn on to give legitimacy and meaning to the idea of blacks having a form of cultural practice that requires knowledge of black history in order to understand and fully participate. Culture is posed as experience and knowledge, as a thing, a commodity that is the basis of understanding and legitimacy:

> J: *Explain to me again the bit about having white people on it?*
> Eulyn: *I just think, [pause] I don't think they know enough about it to say that*
> J: *When you say "it"*
> Eulyn: *About the history behind it.*
> J: *. . . and they need to know the history to be able to do it.*
> Eulyn: *Yeah. And also it's our culture you know. It's fine if you want to watch it and stuff. But it's something we can say we have, we did it you know.*

In a similar vein another student saw black culture as the primary rationale of the group, as something that is rooted, that can be possessed and should not necessarily be shared with or imitated by non-blacks:

> Joy: *That's our culture. I don't like people trying to get in it.*

From Eulyn and Joy's narratives, we can see how a shared history becomes an important boundary marker of black collectivity. Participation of non-blacks in this specific black- identified activity is channelled and monitored on the rationale that not just an understanding is required but also a *rootedness* in a specific historical formation. A sense of collective "blackness" is used to exclude those who do not possess such an understanding. Eulyn's narratives also suggest an understanding of culture that is supportive of Omar's critique of black culture as based upon maintaining a difference from mainstream culture.

Maintaining a sense of collectivity through the unity of the step team was not always easy, and often points of contestation emerged. Not all students supported this use of culture to maintain a difference from non-blacks. Another student, Euda, was more ambivalent about the social dynamics of exclusion based on a lack of knowledge of black experiences:

> *Still a lot of people don't have the courage to join . . . [the dance group] I think that's Okay, it's not like I can do anything about it. So I don't say anything.*

However, this sense of collective blackness was not just racialised, but also gendered, with none of the young black men involved in the activities of the group. The rationale for this fragmentation of a perceived black activity along gender lines was identified by one of the young women as due to issues of masculinity:

> J: *Do the boys have anything to do with the step team?*
> Etta: *No. They would never have anything to do with it. That's how they are, "rough" that's a better term for--"rough." They are too "rough" to be on a step team. They'd be too embarrassed. Yeah we asked them. We begged couple of them. They are like . . . they even laughed.*

Religion was also a point of contestation with regard to the step team providing a place for black unity. Many of the members of the team classified themselves as religious or as attending a church. At times, conflicts emerged between supporting church and supporting the step team. At such times one student identified that church was always given primary consideration. As she explains it, her religious affiliation gave her:

> Eulyn: *Stability [pause] and [pause] it gives you something to look forward to, you know. Like [pause] a purpose in life kind of.*

However, for some religious denominations, public dancing and displaying the body was regarded as inappropriate. In the following narrative, Etta illustrates how she was able to use the portrayal of the step team as a black/African-identified activity in order to quell fears of stepping as a morally inappropriate activity:

> *First she had a big problem with it. I wasn't allowed to do it. But I tried to convince her that it's not dancing. It's just "stepping." . . . but my mum finally got the idea that it was more like a African history step thing. Not "whining up" and stuff like that. That, she has a problem with, same with Joanne's mum. And that's [another] problem too. Some of the girls still want to add in reggae and stuff. And if my mum came and Joanne's mum came we would be in this whole lot of trouble.*

At other times, historical memory was seen as irrelevant to the present in terms of collective identity. Instead, a memory of slavery was viewed as a tool to deny individual black responsibility and action/inaction in the present day. Juliet illustrates how, for her, collective history and memory is used negatively as a tool by blacks to block individual responsibility in the present:

> Juliet: *Like come on man get on with it. You know those people in the States. They get me vexed. "Oh slavery this, slavery that." "Shut up!" It happened ages and thousands, centuries ago. Like get over it!*

For this student, collective memory does not outweigh individual responsibility. Blacks who have not achieved success in education or the labour market are represented as fully responsible for their own fate. As interviewer, I attempted to probe the students' answer by posing a further question:

> J: *Sometimes it's difficult though, no?*
> Juliet: *How is it difficult? Like come on. . . they are not making it any better by just sitting down not doing anything. Why don't they try to make a difference and get up off their butt and go and try to get an education and a proper job? I don't get it. Like don't go on about it I say.*
> J: *What about racism in the US?*
> Juliet: *They talk about that too much too.*
> J: *You think so?*
> Juliet: *Yeah? //In what way?// Maybe . . . I really think, I think everybody just need to get racism out of their head. That's my opinion. I think everybody needs to stop thinking about it. And stop jumping to conclusions.*

For this student, the gap between history and consciousness is filled by a dominant economic discourse and negates the role of history. Historical memory and knowledge is used as a source of power in social relations, not just between black and white students as in the example of the dance group, but also in social interaction between black students. In the following narrative, one student identifies a feeling of isolation from the sense of community that can be developed around historical memory. For her, the variable that separates her from the black group is "knowledge" of black experiences. She describes her experiences at a social event:

> *Euda: I felt uncomfortable because I thought there would be other people there not just black people. I feel intimidated when I am around all these people and they are like expecting me to know this and that. I know about my parent's culture but I don't know like everything.*

Links in Everyday Experience

Some of the students regard identity as based on experiences that link individuals based on blackness. Some students, in recognising commonalties, used social descriptors rather than biological affinities in order to make links with other blacks. For Joy, common experiences among blacks were often dependent on external forces and definitions:

> Joy: *Calling each other names, you know [pause] racial names and stuff . . . and their opinions of like other people are the same. They have gone through the same experiences that you have. Like the hair bit . . . . Or being called racial names at school, that type of thing you know. Or [pause] yeah like the family discipline. That's the things I can look at [pause] and oh yes, dancing, liking the same music, going out, same kind of dressing same kind of style. Um [pause] Same kind of guy choice. All of that.*

Or

> Denzil: *There are certain things that a black friend could identify with that your other friends can't. In terms of not getting a job, not getting a job because they won't hire coloured people or whatever. Any kind of discrimination white people can't really identify with. Life is harder if you're coloured. It's that simple.*
> J: *And that's what you think gives you a commonality with other sort of coloured and blacks?*
> Denzil: *Anybody who basically isn't blonde hair blue eyed, has it harder in life.*

Differing understandings of raced experiences means that some students are likely to choose, as confidants, those who are most likely to empathise with their experiences. As Denzil continues, at times differing racialised identities can undermine the process of understanding:

> *I have one friend that's very um [pause] not so much racist as he is a [pause] what's the word? [pause] He's, he's kind of like he has to be efficient, has to be this, has to be that, and kind of that's the way it is and accept it kind of thing. And he'll always say, well black people are this. They lead the crime whatever, whatever. But he doesn't talk about how it's a product of the white man's government and all this stuff. He neglects to see everything else. He is British, very proud of his Britishness. And so he is always talking about how great England is but he doesn't . . . . There are so many things that are not that great about England.*

Thus the difficulty of some friends in recognising raced experiences within Canadian society can be compared to bell hooks's (1997) argument that the mainstream of society " believe that all ways of looking that highlight difference subvert the liberal conviction that it is the assertion of universal subjectivity (we are all just people) that will make racism disappear (p.167).

Music as a Resource of the Diaspora

Throughout the narratives, various sources of commonality are called on in order to indicate the ways in which blackness as a cultural form unifies the students. While such sources varied from food, strict parents, through to common dispositions on life, the most frequently-stated form of unity was that of music. This postulation with regard to the unifying force of music is not unknown among the discourses of blackness that circulate within white-dominated societies as a yard stick of authentic blackness. Paul Gilroy (1995), in discussing the relationship between music and cultural identity argues that:

> music dominates popular culture. It is central to [a] . . . consideration of cultural identity because of its global reach, and because it is repeatedly identified as a special area of expressive culture that mysteriously embodies the inner essence of racial particularity." (p. 25)

Although the narratives construct music as a source of unification for black peoples of the African diaspora and continent, the choice of music assigned to the category black drew primarily on genres that are regarded as having their origins in the African diaspora rather than the continent. Thus r&b, jazz, rap, calypso, reggae and soca were all identified as signifying blackness in their musical forms. In the following narrative, Euda identifies her breadth of musical preferences:

> Etta: *I like Usher, but I wouldn't like buy the CD I'd like tape it off some one. Uum, I like . . . See to me, rap is good. When I say rap is good maybe it's not a good thing. But I like rap. [pause] If it is not [pause] just straight rap. Like if it has like music. Like Mase is kind of a good rap because . . . it's rap but his style, the way that . . . it has a kind of flow, it has to have a style. It depends on who is in it. And it depends on if it's one group, or more that one group. And it doesn't really matter either way just as long as it's a good group. I don't like hard core rap. Nothing to it. I guess you could say? I like rap like Mase. I like Foxy Brown is okay 'cuz then they have singing and a rap. It's good 'cuz it's catchy as you could say. Biggie was, I have to say his thug stuff was really good. And when they feature a lot of artist and stuff, that's cool, and Puff Daddy.*

Or as Phyllis indicates:

> Phyllis: *I can listen to almost anything. Just usually if I am going to listen to music by myself though it's usually r&b or reggae. But if I am going to go out somewhere I am kind a accepting. Like I am not very picky. As long as there is music in my ear and I have my friends there I am Okay.*
> J: *So R&B though, you said if you were on your own did you say?*

> Phyllis: *Like if it's me and a couple of friends, couple of my girl friends whatever, we were just chilling and listen to r&b and stuff.*

Interestingly, very few students identified musical forms from the African continent as of consistent importance in their listening repertoire. The following student's taste in music was not typical of the participant in the study:

> J: *What music do you listen to?*
> Merle: *Rap of course. R&B. um [pause] Nigerian music, I love Nigerian music. It's so moving. It's like, you have your rap and your r&b but then when it's like um [pause] like at a Nigerian function . . . . It is so fun 'cuz it's like moving you know. It's fast and I also like jazz. I like um [1] I am not really into blues that much as jazz, but I really like jazz. And classical helps me study. I use it sometimes. But hardly.*

For students with heritages directly in the continent of Africa, there was no automatic alignment with music from the continent as a whole or from the country where their parents were born. Where access to genres associated with the continent were acknowledged, it was often via parents rather than the airwaves or digital pulses of mass media. Thus, the spaces where the students had access to such music were often private rather than public. As one student revealed about a parent from the continent:

> Toni: *No he doesn't listen to any music? Like he does sometimes. Like he has some tapes of . . . King Sonny Adeh, like some other Nigerian artists, but he doesn't really listen to them. He will occasionally. Say like he has some friends over he will like play [them].*

Black music seems to be primarily from North America and the Caribbean, with few of the students being regular listeners of music from the continent:

> J: *Do you ever listen to music from continental Africa?*
> Omar: *Well my parents do. I listen to it. In the car, my dad, he plays a lot. Um [pause] I used to go to like, [pause] pot luck parties with my parents things like that. That's what they used to play. I listened to that. I don't listen to it by myself but when it's there I do.*

Unlike rap, r&b, and reggae, music from the African continent is limited in its general availability. In comparison to the numbers of students who could access rap and r&b and reggae via *MuchMusic* or MTV on cable or satellite, or via audiotapes sent by relatives in the Caribbean, few mentioned any comparable public spaces within which they could access or consume music from the continent.[2] As a result of this comparative lack of easy access of music from the continent, consumption is often confined to private spaces of homes, cars, or ethnic-specific functions, rather than public spaces such as television and radio. One of the consequences of this lack of public space is that there is no consistent public dialogue among the students in relation to music from the continent. Unlike reggae and rap, there is no community of supporters among the students to open a dialogue about music from the continent: to move its use from a private domain to a public domain. It may also be that these students do not consciously align cultural production within the continent as black, preferring to align blackness with production/reproduction within White-dominated societies. This ready willingness of youths from continental Africa to identify with North American blackness is not new. Ibrahim's (200) research on Francophone-African youths in Ontario argues that, "continental African youths find themselves in a racially-conscious society that, wittingly or unwittingly, and through fused social mechanisms such as racist representations, asks them to fit racially somewhere" (p.120).

"Alternative" Style as Binary

One can argue that social order is often maintained through binary oppositions in the creation of "insiders" and "outsiders," as well as through the construction of different categories within the social structure where symbolic systems and culture mediate classification. The narratives illustrate the use of binarism in terms of organising and maintaining a difference between black music and other types of music. Alternative music emerges in several narratives as a binary to black music, enabling a boundary as to what black music is and what it is not:

> Phyllis: *Like the majority of people when they think of black music they think reggae, calypso. Um [pause] now even it's starting to be the "hip-hop" and R&B and stuff like that. //Right// You never see any body thinking like "alternative" or "heavy metal" or any thing.*

With this recognition of alternative as "other than black music," the students were then able to make use of the term in different ways in their everyday interaction. This was most evident in their positing of alternative music as opposite to rap or other black-informed music in terms of listening choice. In a similar vein, the following student, in discussing her choice of music, indicates a heavy base line as common to her musical preferences and contrasts it with alternative music:

> Joy: *And I don't know. I am like [pause] I think I like a lot of types that are like kind of related to each other, a lot of them I like have heavy baseline. That rhythm and stuff. And um I am not into that alternative stuff.*

In this instance, just as certain genres of music were identified with black people or as "black music," so were other genres associated with non-blacks. Of the various genres of music discussed, "alternative music" seemed to be the most consistently identified as non-black music. Alternative music is presented as "other" in some of the narratives. For some students, this process of using the term alternative as a code for "other than black" was consistent throughout their narratives. For example, Joy's narratives use alternative not only as a relation against which to describe her musical preference for a heavy base line, but also to codify her reception of music videos. In discussing reception of music videos in general, she perceives alternative music as indecipherable, as nonsense, a binary opposite to rap and r&b videos:

> Joy: *Some of the alternative music videos. It doesn't really make sense what they are doing. It's like, what is this? They will be doing some unnecessary things that fit into like the "new wave" style of music or something like that. It's just nonsense or whatever? Some of their videos like the music I may not like it but some of the videos may like be funny or whatever. But the r&b and the rap stuff like that. The videos, I am used to them so, I like them.*

Alternative music[3] was seen as representative of a specific "white" lifestyle that was dominant among youth and in some of the city's schools. Etta, in discussing why she found one former school environment "totally white and naive about blacks' experiences, drew on references to alternative music to indicate her isolation and alienation:

> Etta: *They don't get anything [about black people] Things like that or things like. It's an "alternative school." Like a lot of people there are like alternative. People are like kind a crazy. I can't take that either. Alternative music and that, "Oh no" I had to get out of there.*

In that alternative music was placed outside the norm of black music, its acceptance by a black student was thus indicative of other attitudes and values about the self. The following narrative illustrates the way that students draw on conceptions of alternative music in order to indicate a sense of eclecticism and "openness" to musical genres:

> Gerald: *I like all kinds of music even alternative, even some rock & roll. I wouldn't buy the CDs but like I could stand the songs. I like the songs.*

Music is also used in order to codify and align individuals with groups

> Phyllis: *But if you go by like groups as in like [pause]; which ones listen to "hip-hop" and stuff like that and the other ones listen to alternative and stuff. Like alternatives dress kind a grungy. They wear like the ripped up dirty clothes, this and that. Well they weren't actually dirty but they look like it by the way they wear them. Then you have the kids who listen to "hip-hop" wear the big baggy jeans and the big tee shirt and always got to wear sporty stuff. Nike this and that all the gold and everything.*

This view of "alternative" as outside black-identified musical forms is used to code and give meaning to other areas of social interaction, such as gender relations. For example, one young man initially defined a relationship with a young woman as unlikely, because whereas he identified with rap and reggae, the young woman was regarded as alternative in style and musical taste:

> Melvin: *Like And like . . . she came along and like [pause] Out of any relationship, I would have never thought that I would have like hook up with her. 'Cuz she was like a little alternative girl you know and listen to alternative stuff. And like they have like a little eyebrow ring and all of that nonsense [pause] and dyed hair this colour and that.*

Despite the construction of binary distinctions between the two musical genres, at times there is slippage. In the following narrative Melvin identifies a link between the two musical genres that indicates that they may not be totally polarised opposites. He reveals how a friend who is "into alternative" can still appreciate rap via an appreciation of its cousin "ska."

> Melvin: *I don't know because all those alternative people got in the "ska" right and then like that's like a similar form. [to reggae] So that's how she got down into that.*

This recognition that alternative has some connection to reggae undermines the claims that the two genres are opposite, indicates instead that their histories are dialogical. Constructions of difference are social, and the distinctions that are made draw upon the social rather than any essence within the two musical genres. Positioning is more to do with identification and its social consequences for interaction rather than inherent differences.

As with any study of human conduct, the participants did not uniformly define the term black. While the students might highlight a sense of unity by adoption of the descriptor black, when the narratives were analysed such unity was found to be tentative rather than definite, cultural rather than biologically essential. Although those outside and within the group might well ascribe the term black as an identity, black identity was something that had to be worked at by the black students; it was as much achieved as ascribed. While some students identified themselves in essentialist ways, there was no "natural" or essentialist unity in the ways in which the students perceived themselves.

Diasporan Fragmentation

Nationality intersects musical choices identified as black and thus fragments any primordial claims of black homogeneity. Musical identifications emerge as an important point of contestation in terms of perceived collective nature of black identity.

Used in differing ways for maintaining intra group differences, some students draw on musical choices as a means to identify themselves as similar to or different from their black peers and other racialised and social groups. For students whose parental origins are in the Caribbean, soca and calypso were identified as listening choices alongside reggae and rap. Reggae also had appeal to other students whose parental backgrounds were not in the Caribbean but who interacted with peers from the Caribbean. However, it was problematic to identify these Caribbean variants as musical genres adopted by all black students. As this student indicates with regard to reggae as listening choice:

> Phyllis: *I would say it would have to depend. Because most African people I talk to don't like reggae. //Oh really?// Then you talk to a lot of people from the islands, and they don't like any thing that Africans do either. So it would depend on where you are from? Because [pause]; most people identify with reggae, calypso, this and that. Right?*

Although reggae was identified within some student narratives as a form of black music, there was no uniform or easy acceptance of this musical form by all black students. Students identified themselves in general with reggae, as well as with individual artists such as Buju Banton, Mad Cobra, Shabbah Ranks, Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, and Red Rat. Although students designated their choices as just "reggae," in actuality the latter artists are aligned with a subgenera of reggae, namely dancehall. Dancehall reggae has developed most extensively in Jamaica, where according to Nelson George, "dance hall is so dominant . . . that indigenous hip-hop groups on the island have little chance to blossom" (p. 205). Although not often acknowledged, in terms of lyrics and contents dancehall and rap share similar orientations towards gender and violence.[4] Stephens (1998) argues that:

> this 'new' reggae was a type of "low" cultural production that was much more difficult to aestheticise than Marley's music. The crude lyrics tend to be mainly about gun culture, sexuality, and "slackness," and were expressed in a thick Jamaican patois that is extremely difficult for an American audience, white or black, to decipher. This was also a more threatening form of reggae music for white audiences because it could not be removed from the very live black bodies who produced, consumed and enjoyed it in the ritual spaces of dance hall. (p. 162)

In discussing reggae, Michelle Stephens (1998) argues that reggae as a genre has become a site of contestation in North America. She further argues that symbolic of this tension has been the way in which reggae musician Bob Marley has been commodified during the 1990s as a "natural" mystical figure with universal appeal across race: a reading that negates his more radical "roots" and "culture" positioning. For Stephens (1998), dance hall reggae has emerged as "a very different contender for Marley's throne," with a strong challenge to the direction which modern reggae was taking (p. 161). In some of the narratives this contestation was evident, as Marley was regarded as much more universal and open in terms of access regardless of national heritage, while dance-hall lyrics were much more difficult to access and had to be worked at.

One student, Melvin, identified himself specifically with dance hall reggae rather than other subgenera of reggae. His narratives reveal not only his linking of dance-hall reggae with gangsta rap but also the ways in which music is a symbolic social process. In the following narrative, Melvin discusses what he perceived as the similarities and the differences between "inspirational" reggae, rap, and dance-hall reggae:

> J: *Dance hall? So what's dance-hall reggae?*
> Melvin: *Well, the other reggae is like more common, but the contents pretty much differ.*
> J: *What's the difference between dance hall reggae and the other reggae.*
> Melvin: *Well, most of the other reggae is more like cultural and political. While it still has a bit of political in dance hall too but it's like. The type I am listening to is like kind a "gangsta reggae"*
> J: *The equivalent of "g angsta rap?" So what does that talk about then?*
> Melvin: *Well, pretty much all the same stuff like "gangsta rap" talks about. It talks about guns, um violence, so and so forth.*[5]

To some extent, Melvin identifies how dance hall reggae may well evoke similar responses among those who listened to gangsta rap. Other students also identify the ways in which reggae, as a genre, is similar to gangsta rap. But whereas Melvin saw such content as unproblematic, for the following student the lyrics, when deciphered, were problematic:

> Doreen: *But some of the stuff they are singing is just pure filth. And they play it like on the TV and everything. But they say a whole bunch of nastiness on the thing, because people don't know what they are singing except for Jamaicans. Who can understand the reggae you know. But as for everybody else, they are talking pure like nastiness on the thing. They are talking about genitals and everything. And people don't understand it 'cuz they are talking so fast and you know they have their accents and everything.*

This unacceptability of some reggae lyrics was also seen in the wider focus groups, as one participant indicated:

> Roy: *My mum doesn't really let me listen to new reggae. 'Cuz she thinks it's like garbage. But She likes the old-time stuff like Bob Marley.*
> J: *What would she see as new reggae?*
> Roy: *Like the dubbing par . . . I think like the way they talk and she always think that my head is like always focussing on that.*
> J: *And what would she like your head focussed on?*
> Roy: *On school right now.*

Below, Gerald's narratives indicate similarities between reggae and rap, not just in relation to guns but also with regard to the performer's construction of sexuality. In discussing sexual orientation his narratives suggest:

> Gerald: *It's in like lots of songs. Lots of rap songs, lots of reggae songs. Like how it's bad, and not acceptable. And u::m. I don't know. We still accept it though.*

The type of black male identity constructed through reggae is one that is heterosexual. In 1992, Buju Banton's homophobic lyrics in "Boom Bye Bye" caused a controversy, as did Shabba Ranks' comment of support that, "God created Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve." Chang and Chen (1998) argue that:

> the militantly anti-homosexual attitude of Jamaicans, men and women alike, is startling . . . . Indeed, a 1996 poll indicated that 96 percent of Jamaicans were against homosexual relationships being legalised. The dance hall is full of songs condemning homosexuality and no stage show goes without at least one ringing condemnation which inevitably draws a huge chorus of approval from the crowd. (p. 204)

As well as indicating the ways in which musical genres are seen as overlapping, the latter narrative also draws attention to the ways in which language, i.e., patois, fragments the perceived unity of black identity. For those students whose parents were born on the continent of Africa or in North America and who were not familiar with patois spoken in the Caribbean, rap lyrics were presented as more accessible than those of reggae. However, the latter explanation begs the question as to whether it was the language that is not accessible or whether the reason that rap is more accessible is as a result of its wide access to audiences via the telecommunications industry. In contrast, soca, calypso, or reggae, to a lesser extent, is much less widely distributed via mediazation and the proliferation of cable networks.

Dominance of Jamaicans–Microphysics of power

What Foucault terms relations of power are evident throughout the students' narratives. Although on the whole the students would see themselves as living within a society dominated by European-Canadian culture, this was not the only point of domination experienced. Also evident was a contesting of the ways in which Jamaica and a Jamaican identity subsumed identities associated with the "smaller" islands in the Caribbean. Jamaica and Jamaicans are often taken to represent the universal in terms of Caribbean experiences and the meanings of Caribbean blackness. The following students, whose parental heritages are from one of the smaller Caribbean Islands, reveal how Jamaican identity becomes intertwined with power relations to fragment not only the black identification, but also the Caribbean identification:

> Eulyn: *They just . . . for one they think like [pause] their island is the best island and they just portray themselves really differently. In Canada, the Jamaicans think that [pause] you know that they are hot stuff. But I was told back in Jamaica they are nothing like that. They are nice calm people, [pause] And [in Canada] they are really loud too.*

Or for another student:

> Etta: *So they [non-Caribbean blacks] don't understand much about West Indians like they have no idea. They've never been to [Barbados] or [Grenada] before. We had to like explain to them. Of course they have heard of Jamaica. They always hear about Jamaica [said with sarcasm].*

At times, this issue of Jamaicans representing the universal in terms of black experiences in Alberta and Canada is generalised to other social situations. In this instance the issue concerns what type of dance group might represent "blackness" and if such a group would be able to represent differing forms of black dance such as calypso:

> Doreen: *But I wouldn't put Jamaicans because I don't think they understand it. 'Cuz you know how they think they are better than everybody else. Like I wouldn't put Jamaicans in, no seriously I wouldn't.*

As stated earlier, the Caribbean is a complex formation of islands that often becomes subsumed under the identity of Jamaica. However, as Winston James (1996) argues, "divided by the distance of the sea—the distance between Port of Spain (Trinidad) and Kingston (Jamaica) is equivalent to that from London to Moscow" (p. 156). One of the primary mechanisms for promoting Jamaica as a universal rather than a particular island within the Caribbean is commercialisation of reggae music especially via representations of Bob Marley. This latter discourse is evident within several narratives as is the consequent positioning of smaller Caribbean islands with genres of music other than reggae. By consuming different genres of music the students align themselves with different Caribbean islands. This symbolic representation of Jamaica with reggae and other islands with calypso or soca is active among many students, whether born in the Caribbean or not:

> Eulyn: *Probably? Yeah. Like I think of reggae as Jamaican and calypso gets into like [pause] all the other countries down in the Caribbean. //uumph// I don't really relate Calypso with Jamaicans. I don't relate, yeah they listen to it they all listen to it. But it's just not the first thing that comes to mind.*

Or as another student whose heritage is in the Caribbean indicated:

> Mirelle: *Reggae [pause] I would say mostly Jamaican, I would associate it with Jamaica. I would listen to it. Mostly reggae I think about Jamaicans. And I think calypso or soca with somewhere like Trinidad. Like with smaller islands like Trinidad. The small islands I would say.*

Although reggae was presented as a popular genre of music, there were also demarcations in musical choices made between Jamaica and other Caribbean islands. In some cases, a strong adherence to genres of island music other than reggae was used as a marker, serving the dual purpose of indicating nonalignment with Jamaica as well as an alignment with "small islands." Thus, some students who wanted to maintain a distinction between themselves and the larger Caribbean island of Jamaica aligned themselves more specifically with music such as soca and calypso from the "small islands." Such musical choices were also an opportunity to reinforce parental heritage and culture from these other islands. The student below identifies how she makes this distinction. For her, the affiliation with calypso was also a way of marking difference from the "large island"—Jamaica:

> Etta: *You know what? I think half the reason why I only like calypso is because Calypso identifies more with the small islands.*

While some of the above narratives position reggae as more pleasurable in terms of beat, other aspects of its construction make its adoption by all black students problematic. In comparing reggae to rap, the latter was regarded as a more uniformly-accessible form of music in comparison to the more heavily patois-laden reggae. As discussed above, dance-hall reggae that has become popular over the past decade offers more dense lyrics than the inspirational "reggae" associated with Bob Marley. The following narratives illustrate the ways in which the discourse surrounding Bob Marley has placed his music within a different cultural space to that of recent subgenres:

> Doreen: *He is a good singer. Lots of people like Bob Marley too . . . but he doesn't sing . . . like in the dance hall, you know those dance hall reggae? //Oh? // That's [Marley] just so deep and it's made just for the parties, and then there is reggae, they've got some reggae that's like Christian . . . yeah [pause] like . . . some circle people and they have reggae that's like for religious things. Then they have reggae that's just for like dance hall like for youth, you know. Just to make them "go off" and like have fun at parties and stuff. And that's the reggae I like . . . like that one that you can "go off." 'Cuz it just gets you hyped whatever right. But Bob Marley [pause] he sings like good songs and he isn't singing it like where you cannot understand you know. He sings like regular [pause] you could sing along with. I like him though.*

Doreen's narrative illustrates a positioning of dance hall reggae that identifies it with the descriptor "youth" rather than "adult" and illustrates the ways in which pleasure intersects receptivity.

Reception of dance hall reggae by the wider group of black students was further complicated by language use. In particular, for students whose families were not from Jamaica or the Caribbean, translating the cryptic patois used in reggae songs was at times problematic. However, some were able to overcome this difficulty if they had access to friends who were familiar with patois and could translate the lyrics:

> Omar: *I am not Jamaican. So I just listen to the songs. I can't even understand what they are saying. //yeah// But I like the way it sounds, you want to move, you want to dance to it and things like that. I can relate more to . . . like r&b than I can to reggae.*
> J: *How is that?*
> Omar: *Reggae will be harder. It's just that I can't understand what they are saying!*
> *J: Because of the patois?*
> Omar: *Yeah, I don't know what they are saying? I got like, I got, I wouldn't say a lot, but I have enough Jamaican friends to understand some of it. Like if they are talking like I know, I know for sure that there is one reggae song that I know all the words to. And then pretty much the rest of them I can't even hear anything.*

Or another student whose heritage is in North America and the continent of Africa:

> Merle: *Probably 'cuz I have quite a few Jamaican friends. So they speak round me then I am like really? So I start to understand it. But my brother and my sister they know it like [pause] they know it. Like sometimes I will be like, "what?" and they will know what they are saying. Like my brother is really good. And he can put on the voice and everything.*

Or Frank, whose heritage is in North America:

> Frank: *Oh I've heard it. I can't understand it so I don't listen to. They always make fun of me. "Hey you can't understand that either" dong, dong dong, that's what it sounds like.*
> J: *Is it similar to gangsta or some thing like that? Or is it that you don't even know.*
> *Frank: Don't even know.*
> J: *Do you listen to regular reggae? //No// You don't do that either.*
> Frank: *Well I like it but I just don't, I can't understand it. If I am listening, I am listening to the beat or trying to get a word out of it. "I heard that one!"*

Although the latter two narrative highlight how the patois used in reggae is not received uniformly, and tends to fragment any perceived sense of homogenous black cultural formation, nonetheless social interaction that takes place among the students still provides opportunity for developing a sense of collectivity around musical choices.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed the ways in which the students orient themselves in relation to a collective black identity. This identification as black is accomplished in various ways through understanding the self in relation to Canadian identity and in relation to other blacks in the diaspora and the continent. There is some evidence of the development of an "outernational" consciousness–a consciousness not aligned with the boundedness of the Canadian State. For many of the students with Caribbean heritage this consciousness is one related to identification with "blackness" rather than to the continent of Africa. There is for these students with Caribbean heritage no sense of a return to an "origin" represented by Africa. Any sense of a return that is envisaged is to the last "port of call." As Gilroy (1997) observes, "the memories of slavery are hard to maintain when the rupture of immigration intervenes" (p. 336). It is a Caribbean "culture" that they align themselves with and which they see as giving meaning to their identity. They make use of musical formations such as reggae, calypso, and soca in order to identify more closely with the Caribbean.

The narratives highlight how construction of a black group identity is shaped by media culture in general and more specifically by a hegemonic US culture. It is worth noting that this media culture is one that is referenced by the descriptor "youth." This US youth culture constructs symbols that the students then have available for collective and individual identity formation. In terms of identification with each other, youth culture provides an avenue through which students with heritage from the continent of Africa, the Caribbean as well as North America can communicate. Using this conception of youth culture, the next chapter will analyse the students' narratives to ascertain if and how African Canadian students receive US hip-hop cultural products such as music.

Notes

---

[1] Stepping is a rhythmic hand clapping and foot stomping performance.

[2] Minister Faust has a radio program which plays music from the continent. The national award-winning The Terrordome Afrika All-World News Radio, The Terrordome Africa All-World Internet News Service, and The Phantom Pyramid. His programmes broadcast on FM 88.9 the University of Alberta's radio station.

[3] *Alternative* is the term used in 1960s to refer to UK and US underground or counterculture performers – While punk in the 1970s was clearly alternative, the present scene builds on punk. Alternative label applied in 80s and 90s to grunge bands. [Nirvana—encompasses college rock, rap trash, metal and industrial].

[4] Stephens suggests that in 1988 when U.S. DJ. Red Alert began playing dancehall music; he was "perhaps the first hip-hop radio DJ. to acknowledge stylistic links between the two genres" (Stephens, 1996, p.270).

[5] Gilroy argues that the shift in reggae towards violent lyrics can be related to the "consolidation of Seaga's regime and the consequent militarisation of ghetto life" (1987/91, p. 188).

Chapter 6

Music & Regimes of Representation

In a mass-mediated image culture, it is representations that help constitute an individual's view of the world, sense of personal identity and gender, laying out of style and lifestyle.
(Kellner, 1995, p. 60)

Introduction Chapters Six –Nine

As indicated in chapters four and five, American youth culture is seen as a primary source of identification–as the very blackest culture–the one that provides the measure on which all others can be evaluated (Gilroy, 2000, p. 181). It is this identification with black-American youth culture that is at the forefront of analysis in this chapter and the consequent two chapters. I try to indicate the various ways in which media contours understandings of black identity as represented by and through youth culture. This latter exploration takes place via an analysis of the student' narratives in relation to youth cultural texts such as films, music, and music videos that are consumed. Of import is this distancing between the site of production and consumption of rap, what Giddens (1984) identifies as "space-distanciation." As well, the three data chapters identify how representation works intertextually to contour meaning via regimes of representation. Such representations offer students a potential source for identification, as well as for the production and reproduction of cultural forms. Within the data chapters, questions of receptivity are posed as to how the students receive youth cultural forms, and how these forms intersect gender, economic status, sexuality, and parental authority.

Representations are not constructed in isolation, but often work in relation to other social formations in order to develop what Stuart Hall (1997) identifies as a "regime of representation." The films that are watched, the magazines that are read, and the music that is listened to offer an insight into the ways in which students are able to create meanings from the varying media representations that they encounter. In speaking more specifically of music, Negus (1997) indicates the importance of such cultural forms when he suggests that a "sense of identity is created out of and across the processes whereby people are connected together through and with music" (p. 133). In a similar way, Negus' postulation concerning social connections can be extended into the areas of magazine consumption, television viewing, and adoption of dress styles.

Language is the means of communication. It is via language that these students come to construct and know the world. This coming to "know" the world"–how we recognise it as having a reality external to the self–becomes an important mediating force in terms of how the students place themselves in relation to media texts that highlight blackness. By analyzing the narratives of the students, I explore media culture and the ways that students position themselves in relation to the cultural representations of blackness that such youth cultures provoke in the everyday lives of the students. In order to ascertain the meanings that the students give to the youth culture that they encounter, one has to analyze the interactional process and the subject positions that are produced. Denzin (1989) argues that as such:

> . . . meaning is biographical, emotional, and felt in the streams of experience of the person. Locating meaning in the interaction involves uncovering how a person emotionally and biographically fits an experience into their emerging, unfolding definitions of self. It is assumed that this is done through the production of personal experience and self-stories. Meaning is anchored in the stories persons tell about themselves. (p. 62)

In presenting my data in this chapter, I draw on themes across media genres in recognition of the intertextual way that these discourses of representation are worked through by the students. I concentrate on those narratives through which the students construct musical preference. I try to ascertain if Gerald's comment (end of chapter 5) is correct with regard to the influence of African-American culture on African Canadians. Concentrating on the relationship between Canada and US will reveal how these national formations operate as sites of production and how they shape the students consumption of their products. All of the latter should tell me something about the students' identities, what they align themselves with, and how. I draw on mediazation to help me theorise my way through the narratives with regard to what is an aspect of economic globalisation. Finally, cultural theorists have recently begun to recognise the role that pleasure plays in interpellating people into subject positions. With that I attempt to trace the use of their phrase "going off." I start my discursive analysis of their narratives with an overview of the sociopolitical placing of black youth culture, and the hip-hop phenomenon.

Black Youth Culture

Over the past twenty years youth culture in general, and North American black youth culture in particular, has been dominated by the social formation of hip-hop culture. As a cultural formation, hip-hop consists of the intertextual relationships between rap, graffiti, and break dancing[1]. Although over the past few years the influence of graffiti and break dancing has waned, they were, in the early stages of this cultural phenomena, thriving aspects of hip-hop's formation. Perkins (1996) suggests that the decline of break dancing was a consequence of corporate America's raid on hip-hop culture, alongside the growth of video medium that replaced "authentic break dancers" with "'video hos,' ' fly girls' and 'fly boys'" (p. 14).

Hip-hop as a cultural form developed in the 1970s from a combination of African America, Caribbean and Latino sources. Although its origins are associated solely with the African-American community in the New York Bronx, its "roots" and "routes" are much more complex. As Nelson George (1998)describes the process:

> . . . one of the prevailing assumptions about hip-hop is that it was, at some early moment, solely African-American created, owned, controlled, and consumed. It's an appealing origin myth–but the evidence just isn't there to support it. Start with who "invented" hip-hop: in its days as an evolving street culture, Latino dancers and tastemakers–later internationally known as breakers–were integral to its evolution because of the synergy between what the mobile DJs played and what excited the breakers. Also, Caribbean culture clearly informed hip-hop's Holy Trinity—Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and Kool Herc. Two of them, Flash and Herc, were either born in the Caribbean or had close relatives from there. In Bam's case, non-American black music had been essential to his aesthetic. (p. 57)

Social, economic, and political factors were also at play in the US during the early years of the cultural formation of hip-hop. In support of the latter, Tricia Rose (1994) argues that much of this early development of hip-hop was undertaken against the backdrop of a "post-industrial city . . . that shaped their cultural terrain, access to space, materials and power"[2] (p. 34). In analysing the narratives of the students, it becomes evident that the youth culture, as indicted in chapter three, consumed and produced by the students, derives primarily from the United States, or is heavily influenced by the US and hip-hop.

Bearing in mind the powerful influence of youth culture (Willis, 1990; Hebdige, 1979; 1988; Rose, 1994; Walcott, 1995) on adolescents, this dominance of US cultural products is interesting when placed in a relation to a new geographic location, namely, Canada. In terms of access to representations of blackness that the students could either identify with or contest, the US media would seem to exert a hegemonic hold over such conceptions in North America and the African diaspora. This dominance of the US was alluded to either directly or indirectly in many of the narratives, as illustrated in chapter three. As Gerald suggested in response to my query as to how he accounts for the dominance of US media culture:

> Gerald: *'Cuz they are number one.*
> J: *Number one?*
> Gerald: *They are like the most powerful. All the movies, all the music, comes from there.*

Gerald's comments provide a starting point for this chapter's and the consequent two chapters' analysis as the students' narratives in relation to music and movies are highlighted to ascertain the extent to which his comments correspond with the lived experiences of the students under discussion. I try to highlight "regimes of representation," what Stuart Hall (1997) identifies as the "the whole repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which 'difference' is represented at any one historical moment" (p. 232). As such, one can identify how representations of blackness gain meaning when they are read in context, against or in connection with other media forms.

Rap Music—Constructions of Blackness Reception and Appropriation

With the decline of break dancing and to some extent graffiti, rap music has come to symbolise the growth and longevity of hip-hop. At times, rap as a genre has achieved almost mythic proportions in terms of its supposed ability to cause social havoc and moral mayhem with youths in the United States and beyond. Development of groups such as the Parents Music Resource Centre (PMRC), founded by Democrat Al Gore's wife Tipper, were important landmarks in the public construction of a "moral panic"[3] about the sexually explicit and violent nature of rap lyrics. The PMRC's subsequent 1984 victory in getting the music industry to apply sticker ratings for obscenity only served to reinforce the heightened sense of danger and possible moral corruption associated with the genre. Rap also received two other very public "outings" which helped to align it as subversive and harmful to mainstream society. The first was the public denouncement by Bill Clinton, during his presidential campaign in 1992, of female rapper Sister Souljah for "calling on black people to kill whites." Critics saw Clinton's actions as a political rather than moral indictment. For many, his response was manufactured to "reach out to the white Americans who thought the Democratic party would always cater to its highly-visibly gadfly, Jesse Jackson, and the 'special interest group'–black folks–he represented" (George, 1998, p. 173). The second "outing" was the very public legal trial of rap group *2 Live Crew* for their misogynist and lewd lyrics on *As Nasty as They Wanna Be*. Banned as obscene by a judge in Florida, the record's lyrics were defended by academic Henry Louis Gates as representative of a code of "black public knowledge." Gates argued:

> *2 Live Crew* is engaged in heavy-handed parody, turning the stereotypes of black and white American culture on their heads. These young artists are acting out, to lively dance music, a parodic exaggeration of the age-old stereotypes of the oversexed black female and male. Their exuberant use of hyperbole (phantasmagoric sexual organs, for example) undermines–for anyone fluent in black cultural codes–a too literal-minded hearing of the lyrics. (*New York Times*, June 19, 1990)

Not everyone in the African American community welcomed Gates' pronouncements, and many criticised the underlying essentialism and sexism in his statements (hooks, 1994; Baker Jr., 1993). Nelson George in his book *Hip-hop America* challenges this public construction of rap as a socially and morally degenerate art form linked inherently and solely with the African-American community. For George (1999), rap and the wider hip-hop culture is not so alien from mainstream US values. Instead, he cautions that:

> It is also essential to understand that the values that underpin much hip-hop–materialism, brand consciousness, gun iconography, and antiintellec-tualism–are very much by-products of the larger American culture. Despite the

> "dangerous" edge of so much hip-hop culture, all of its most disturbing themes are rooted in this country's dysfunctional values. Anti-Semitism, racism, violence and sexism are hardly unique to rap stars but are the most sinister aspects of the national character. (p. xiii)

As discussed in chapter five, "Diaspora as Collectivity," the students' repertoire of music listening ranged from soca, reggae, r&b, to rap. However, since rap has been the most dominant discourse, during the 1980's and beyond, linking music and black identity in North America, this chapter highlights that specific genre as the focus of analysis. As well, within present-day Canadian society there is an existing common sense discourse that positions rap as synonymous with black identity and that consumption of rap music is an inherent aspect of blackness and cultural formation. Thus, the students narratives are analyzed in relation to the ways in which they access and position themselves within the various discourses surrounding the production and reception of rap music.

Reception of Rap

It is evident from the narratives that reception of rap music, as constructed by and through the narratives, is a complex entity that is filtered not only by identification with blackness, gender and sexuality, but also through the production of pleasure, as well as access to economic resource. For those students who had part-time jobs, or whose parents or care givers are classified as being within higher socio-economic groups, ready access to money was an important variable in the ability to purchase differing genres of music. Thus the students' ability to constantly access, purchase and consume rap compact discs or cassette tapes was constrained by various socio-economic factors. As youths, not yet independent adults, many of the students did not have readily-available access to economic resources that could be diverted into purchasing music. At times this lack of resources led to creative ways to access music without draining resources. The following narrative reveals one innovative way in which students are able to maintain knowledge of musical genres within economic limits:

> J: *So where do you get the CDs, are they fairly available in the shops?*
> Gerald: *You can buy them at any music store. But [pause] when I buy lots of my CDs I buy them second hand. 'Cuz they are only like $6 I know the store. They have lots of CDs. So I just go through them and I usually find a couple of CDs that I like that I pay like five bucks for. Instead of going to the store and paying fifteen. Like they might be a few months outdated, like maybe they came out a few months ago and then some one got sick of it and sold them to the store. But I usually find a couple of CDs that I like.*

As well, those students whose access to financial resources was limited, tended to draw on alternative social resources such as friends or siblings in order to consume or gain access to differing genres of music. Taping and sharing of music thus becomes an important mechanism for circumventing the economic constraints placed on these students and a way to increase music consumption. Taping of music occurred across all genres, from rap, through reggae to Christian gospel. The following student describes the various ways in which music that is produced outside Canada gets disseminated across Canada:

> Omar: *Like some people they have friends that live in . . . New York . . . where the music comes out new and then it gets sent down here to them. And then . . . they make copies of it and then it gets around, people hear it and you are like "Who is this?" and you find out and you go to the store and then you look for it or like on MuchMusic, even sometimes "RapCity." You listen to that and you like the song and you find out the artist. You go or, phew, [pause] somebody travels somewhere and gets some new music, then they come back here and listen to it. Like it's all over the place.*

For Mirelle, her brother was a primary source of access to and sharing of recorded rap music:

> Mirelle: *I listen to rap. My brother is mostly into rap, so I pick it up from him.*

Melvin's important source for access to new music was his friend [Robert]. In response to a question as to when he first encountered his favourite group of the moment, he replied:

> *Through my friend [Robert] . . . [Robert] had a tape, and he was playing it for me. And then I like listened to it. And I heard him and I was like "Oh he sounds bad," and so I just taped the song off of him and then I listened to it, and he had like a whole bunch of [the group's] songs. So I taped all those off of him.*

Omar, Melvin and Mirelle's narratives above identify the complexities of gaining access to differing sources and genres of music, and the ways in which peers, family members, and others are important in mediating such reception of music. Such a social process highlights the ways in which musical tastes can, consequently, be contoured by interaction with sibling and peers. As well, such sharing provides opportunity for the development of individual aesthetic tastes that articulate with collective orientations. This process of "sharing" provides opportunities for reinforcing social interaction and exchange, and increases the influence of music beyond those students who can afford to regularly purchase CDs. So for students who have siblings, the access to music is greater than would otherwise be the case. Students who had family and friends in other countries were also a source for gaining access to and expanding the listening repertoire of all students.

It is also noteworthy that the narratives reveal how consumption, i.e., liking and listening to music, does not always cohere with purchasing habits. Tricia Rose (1994) verifies the latter when, in accounting for the greater number of rap sales to middle-class white youths in the US, she argues that "black teen rap consumers have a higher 'pass-along rate,' that is, the rate at which one purchased product is shared among consumers" (p. 8). For Etta, consumption of rap music was contoured not just by sharing with siblings, but also because she preferred visual to aural repetitiveness of rap:

> Etta: *For rap I like Mase. As much as I listen to it I don't buy a lot of CDs and tapes.*
> J: *What do you buy then?*
> Etta: *I don't really buy any CDs and tapes. Mainly because [my brother] buys a lot of them so I just borrow them . . . . Number two, as much as I like to listen to it. "Why don't I buy a lot? Maybe it's the money. I would sooner tape it off. One of the things, I like watching things. I like to watch music videos more than just listen to it. And I like reggae more than rap because rap can get very repetitive.*

There are a variety of venues through which students can access music associated with youth culture. Space and location are important in providing a structure for students to listen to rap and other musical genres. The narratives indicate that hall parties and teen clubs provide such semi-public spaces where rap music can be accessed. These semi-public spaces can become sites for the expression of specific types of social formations.[4] However, as Gerald identifies, youth social venues were not fully "open" to all genres of music, and certain venues become associated with specific genres:

> *At a reggae party they'll just play pure reggae, but if it's just like [pause] like an average hall party . . . they will play mostly hip-hop, some reggae. Probably some r&b. Like a club [pause] they'll play [pause] depends what club. Like some clubs are different. Like Club Megamix, they play like hip-hop and reggae. And [other] different clubs that like play "techno," some rap.*

Even in social spaces dominated by youths, there is a degree of censure to types of music that are perceived as appropriate. Social spaces become racialised at times, a process that is mediated by identification with different genres of music. Phyllis' narratives details the ways in which even the descriptor "hall party" does not represent uniformity in musical taste:

> J: *Tell me about the music you could get at a hall party.*
> Phyllis: *It depends. Like if you are going to a black hall party, you are going to find a lot of reggae, "hip-hop" uum [pause], r&b and stuff. But if you go to like, say, an Oriental, party, you are going to hear a lot of like "techno," some rap [pause] you know like the odd reggae song that's been turned into*

> *"techno" or something. Sometimes you like it but usually it's kinda hard to mix them all together. 'Cuz like [pause] when you have a hall party, you make sure like a whole bunch of like different groups, it's like they try and play "techno" and then you get all the black kids sitting there going "Boo shut it off, shut it off." Then they play a bunch of reggae, and then you get all the other kids going "Boo shut it off."*

Not all students were able to access youth cultural forms to the same extent and degree. While Phyllis' latter narratives might indicate the importance of a black hall party, this access was not uniform among all black students. As Mirelle illustrates, parental authority was often a factor in mediating access to different music genres available via hall parties. Here she constructs how she views hall parties:

> *Actually, my mum doesn't let me go to hall parties. Only like when [pause] it wasn't even a hall party, it was my friend's birthday party she had in a hall. My mum doesn't like hall parties, because anyone comes in, there is no security, anything can happen. Alcohol can be served there, and it doesn't matter the age. 'Cuz it's in a hall or something. So my mum doesn't really like that. But she will let me go to like teen things at like clubs or something. But not too much.*

In continuing her narratives, Mirelle seeks to rationalise an adherence to parental authority by representing going out as not something to be often undertaken. In this way conformity becomes rationalised as individual choice rather than an imposition of parental authority–a sense of Foucault's technologies of the self:

> *I don't mind that though. 'Cuz, um, I don't like going out too much 'cuz then you don't [pause] um, you don't see the value in it. Like when I hardly went and I got to go I'd be like, "Oh my gosh I got to go, I got to go." And I had a lot of fun. But then when you go too much it gets boring and it's the same old thing.*

Parental authority acts as an important mediator in allowing access to music. As Merle's narratives indicate, one's age as well as the lyrics of the song are important factors in being able to access rap music in the home. In speaking of her parents she suggested that:

> *They don't like that nasty stuff. Then again I don't really like get a lot of it. Like a lot of my own CDs they are like [pause] stuff that's clean. But like my brother, since he is older, he will get whatever he wants. And they don't really say anything. My mum is just like [pause] "don't listen to that." "Ok mum." Just don't play it around them, that is. That's kinda bad, but it's true, if you want to know the truth. [mutual laughter]. Like the other day, it's funny, my brother had [pause] there is a CD in my room, and I was about to listen to it. Thank God I wasn't listening to it already. My mum saw the case and it said on it "explicit lyrics." She is like "Are you listening to*

> *this?" I said "No mum . . . of course not. I just keep these CDs [for Lynford] in my room."*

Doreen's narratives, like Merle's, indicate the influence of parents and the censoring of music for certain family members:

> *I like r&b, some rap is all right, but too much swears so. [pause] Oh reggae is good too. Everybody in our house listen to the same thing. Yeah. Like my parents listen to like . . . all r&b, and my dad thinks rap is all right, and he watches it too. Like some days I come home, my dad is sitting down watching RapCity and stuff. So everybody listens to the exact same thing in our house. Like even . . . those that have swearing and stuff. As long as my brother isn't around we are allowed to play it or whatever . . . . It depends what type of music though, we can't have "mother this, mother that." But we can listen to rap, and my dad like he knows all that stuff. I don't know why, I don't know how, and he just knows all of that. He just knows all of that? My mum and my dad are like singing along with the music.*

Music & Pleasure

The ways in which meaning gets represented in music are not just with regard to the content of the lyrics. The beats and combinations thereof also come to evoke pleasure and subjectivisation. As John Storey (1996) argues:

> the pleasure of music is not the pleasure of the representation of something that has happened elsewhere (a reflection of meaning) but the pleasure of what is being made (the making and materiality of meaning). The pleasure and power of popular music is not in the performance emotion but in the emotion of performance. (pp. 106-7)

Social theorists suggest that in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles, the production and regulation of desire, are as important as the construction of meaning. The ways in which the body becomes both the subject and object of pleasure are important.

The narratives construct rap into differing subgenres, such as positive, hardcore gangsta, and lovers. As Phyllis outlines:

> *Wu-Tang and like [pause]; let me think here, Old Dirty Bastard. They are like hard core rap. They are kinda like hard core rap. They are like street rap kinda thing. They take like things that have happened in their lives. Like seeing their friends get shot. Or something bad happening they take it and put it in a song and they kind of express how they feel through the song. Then you have like LL Cool J. He is like the "lover rap" kind of thing. He goes on about "Oh yeah, I saw you at the bus stop" and this and that whatever. And he talks about girls and all that. Then in the middle*

> *you kinda have Puff Daddy where he kinda like takes, like he kinda takes his feelings from like loving someone and like feelings from like someone getting hurt.*

For some students, rap lyrics were positive in the sense that they were a source of learning about self, society and blackness. For Omar this learning was related to the controversial use of the word "nigga" by some rappers:

> J: *So how do you feel about that? About the use of the word?*
> Omar: *Like using the word "nigga?" It's almost–it's exactly what he says. They say in the song that people just use–a lot of black people just use it as like nothing. And that's the way I am too. I listened to it, I'm like yeah, I'm like that too. We don't like pay attention to what the word is for. Like they say through the song is that we got to think about what the word was originally used for. People are like, black people now they just use it around the community like it's nothing. Like who cares, it's just a word. But they are trying to say well you've got to think like what was this word used for? What does it mean? Look in the dictionary, it means dumb, stupid, all those things. So that's what they are trying to say.*

Students' identification with specific subgenres signifies something about the perception of self. One student indicated that for him the message in the rap song was important, and that his ability to hear a message made a distinction between him and some of his friends:

> Denzil: *have a few friends, most of them they don't listen to rap the same reason that I listen to rap. The same way I listen to rap. They listen to rap because they like the music. They don't hear a message. They just hear the words. And they go "They rhyme huh huh huh."*

Interestingly, Denzil's distinction between those who are able to hear the message within a rap song and those who are not was based not only on racialised understandings, but was also intersected by class. The importance of conveying a message with rap was epitomised by several narratives that drew on Wu-Tang Clan as representative of a rap group that had messages within their lyrics. Nelson George (1998) reveals that:

> [Al]though they in fact come from Staten Island, its nine members claim to belong to an ancient and secret sect searching for a coherent vision, the Wu-Tang have used their interest in Asian action movies to inject a sense of the mystical into hip-hop. (George, 106)

Students who identified with Wu-Tang's lyrics were aligned with a variety of rap genres. In the following narrative, Melvin, who aligns himself with gangsta rap, identifies the rise and fall of the group:

> *Wu-Tang? [pause] I love Wu-Tang. //Do you?// Yeah. Wu-Tang is probably the best group that came out [pause] . . . it's so sad that they went down like so quick. And*

> *the reason th[illegible]did? I feel, I don't know, is because of Puff Daddy, who took away their thing. [illegible]z [pause] okay, Wu-Tang came out with 36 Chambers. And 36 Chambers is "wicked." Every MC in Wu-Tang has got some sort of different like style that like all put together sounds good, you know. Like the Riza, he is a like philosophising guy, kind of like a prophet. Method, Method talks about his own thing. Plus he has got the voice and the lyrics. Giza is like a wise guy, the only thing is like a [pause] a couple of them like //Cappadonna?// whew Cappadonna is wicked. His new CD is so . . . .*

Noticeable within the narratives is the way in which the critiques of mainstream rapper Puff Daddy cohere with other discourses evident in other areas of the thesis. For Omar, a fan of message rap, Wu-Tang was credited with having "deep messages," a group that requires reflection:

> Omar: *It's like some hip-hop artist, they'll say something and you just hear it, yeah you hear it. But then after, it takes me like a long time to understand the meaning behind it. //Right// There is like, the reason why everybody likes Wu-Tang . . . they have like [pause] like seriously deep message in their music. //Really?// Like if you pay attention to what they are saying. Like of course some of it is like what everybody is, stereotypes like "yeah they are just swearing, they are just singing all this." Some of it is true like that. But seriously, if some people took some time and listened to exactly what they are saying in the messages. it might take them a lot of time, but if they had the patience, they'd start to like it too. They'd start to appreciate it.*

The way in which this student's narrative identified Wu-Tang as "open" to any racialised or social group was interesting:

> Doreen: *They have been popular. They're like popular with every race. They are one of those groups, you know they are like popular with every race. They are like popular with like skaters, like they are popular with the heavy metal people too. I don't know how but [pause] 'cuz the music they sing. Like it mixes, like you could listen to [pause] like a party and everything, and it sounds good. But then you go to like [pause] like you could go like say [to]white people or whatever, and then you'll like hear them listening to the tune. And you are like "Holy," because the way they sing [pause] its just like . . . [pause] they sing the song [pause] for everybody, not just for black people. Some people just sing songs for black people and stuff.*

Lyrics are an important part of accessing pleasure. Often this pleasure is contained not just within the words themselves but rather is evoked in the performance of the song/rap. It draws on aspects such as the "grain of the voice," the body of the voice, as it sings. As Storey (1996) suggests, "words are sounds we can feel before they are statements to understand" (p. 106). The narratives below identify how, for Melvin, the voice of the rapper "calls" him, in an almost Althusserian sense of interpellation:

> *His voice that caught me. Like caught me out . . . I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. It's like a child's high-pitched voice. But like [pause] the content was just different. So it just something to do with the feelings in me. So I just listened to him. I don't see like that many people listening to it. So I kinda just like keep it to myself.*

The narratives also illustrate how acquisition of the distinctive, in this case knowledge of a little-known rapper, can become a commodity increased by its scarcity. The importance of voice in evoking pleasure is not confined to rap, but is also evident in the other students' responses to other genres of music. Mirelle indicates her attraction to/identification with jazz performers:

> *Wynton Marsalis. I like both types. I usually like the jazz singer voice. The jazz singer voices, 'cuz they are all so full. And the way they like [pause] they'll change [pause] "double de boo bap," something like that. And it sounds nice but also when you just hear the instruments, like the saxophone or the trumpet or something. The drums are kinda nice too.*

One narrative suggests that it is not only the lyrics and "grain of voice" that were the source of identification, but that the appeal of differing genres was related to stages of adolescence. For Phyllis, as students got older, the ability of hardcore/gangsta rap to generate an identification faded:

> Phyllis: *I think it's just a phase. Like everybody [pause] even kids that I talk to out of junior high–now they are going through the phase where it's hard-core rap. Like killing people, and raping your girlfriend, and shooting up your mum, and this and that you know. And you get to high school and it's kinda like well, you know [pause]; that's over with. And it gets like the soft rap. Like LL Cool J and like Foxy Brown. They are kinda considered like soft rap and Jay-Z and stuff, you know. So it's kinda like a lot of people listen to that now.*

Phyllis' allusion to hard and soft rap highlights the issue of the misogyny and profanity contained and promoted by gangsta and hard-core rap musicians. Rap has been severely critiqued (hooks, 1992; George 1999) for its construction of gender relations, both in terms of its support for women rappers and its use of misogynist language in hard core and gangsta rap. In terms of support for women rappers, many of the narratives indicated that women rappers were listened to and appreciated by both genders:

> Omar: *Uh! The beats and the lyrics. If it's a female rapper and she has good beats and she has good lyrics, I'll listen to her. If she doesn't, I won't listen to her. I don't really care.*
> J. *What about lyrics?*
> Omar: *What makes good lyrics? Like, a lot of the things. What you say, the way it sounds, the way you present it, the way it flows. Like if it flows with the beats, then it*

> *sounds good. But if you, like, if the beat is going one way and you are singing another . . . then I can't stand it. That's basically it on female rappers.*

A variety of female rappers were identified, especially Da Brat, Yo Yo, Missy Elliott, Queen Latifah, Mis Pen, Mia X, Salt N. Peppa. The students' narratives reveal a complex positioning in terms of the ways in which gender is constructed and represented in rap music and videos. Women rappers are identified as often constructing their rap in relation to male rappers' lyrics, i.e., addressing their misogyny. As Omar's narrative indicates, when discussing Queen Latifah:

> *Queen Latifah, she is like [pause] the last CD I have of hers she is just basically, like, she was just talking about how she doesn't like it when, I don't know, the same situation when guys are talking about girls. It's just like she is talking about guys. In the way she, her perspective. And that's basically all it was about. I didn't see too much outside of that. She had a song about a guy where she was talking about a guy who was cheating on her. She had a song where she was talking about a guy who went [pause] who went too far trying to impress her. She had a song where she had [pause] she was talking about a guy who was like [pause] disrespecting her.*

Other women rappers were identified with trying to outdo gangsta rappers by adopting a "bad girl" attitude based on explicit sex. Nelson George (1998) suggests that:

> Foxy Brown and Lil' Kim took Salt-N-Pepa's formula, made it more explicit, dropped in designer reference (Foxy favours Dolce & Gabbana, Kim sports Versace), and sold themselves as aggressive sex objects of desire. Whether they sell themselves as sex kitten or demanding lovers, the truth is neither of these MCs has truly explored in her music the complexity of being a young black woman in the 90s–certainly not with the nuance or insight the subject demands." (p. 185)

However, various social relations intersected this projection and reception of sexually explicit lyrics. One young male explains his listening preferences:

> Gerald: *I don't really listen to her too much but whenever I hear [pause] she is always like rapping about sex. [pause] Every time, that's all she ever raps about. Like every time I've heard her.*
> J: *What about Foxy Brown?*
> Gerald: *I've listened to her, but I don't really like her either. //Right// I think she is like the same as Lil Kim.*
> J: *So you are not interested in sex?*
> Gerald: *No. That's all they rap about. Like that's like their whole concept. Just that.*
> J: *Whereas other rappers?*
> Gerald: *Yeah like they could have that too, but like it's not all they will rap about. But for those two, that's like all I ever hear them rapping them about.*

In comparing Lil Kim with Queen Latifah, Mirelle indicates that the difference is based on respect:

> *Mirelle: No. I think they are different. Queen Latifah has more respect. And then Lil Kim is . . . not as [pause] she doesn't show respect. Well maybe she like [pause]. In her lyrics it's not respect. [laugh]*

Similarly, Joy compares Lil Kim with other women rappers in terms of lyrics:

> *They are not as nasty. Like Queen Latifah, usually doesn't talk, kinda like that. MC Lyte, it kinda goes MC Lyte is not bad at all, I don't think. Sometimes she can be nasty, like swear and stuff. But she is not nearly as bad as like Lil Kim. It's not always about sex, sex, sex. And same with Yoyo. Yoyo is usually like, she likes like a party scene, like dancing. That's what she will talk about and stuff, but not . . . .*

For another student, Lil Kim was again seen as a rapper whose lyrics were "nasty" and limited to rhyming about sex:

> J: *You said her lyrics were nasty? What do you mean by nasty? What does she rap about?*
> Omar: *She is like, she is pure like, you can tell a hundred percent of her mind is on sex. //Oh right// And . . . money too. She likes money. So [pause] you put those two together and you start talking about that, after a while you get nasty. That's the way she is.*
> J: *When you say nasty, you mean? Explain a bit more to me.*
> Omar: *You just imagine what she is saying. You are like "Oh, oh what is that?" You know, like she'll say something and you'll imagine it and you'll be, "Ow." That's sick.*

For Melvin, Lil Kim compared unfavourably with another female gangsta rapper, Mia X, not just in terms of lyrics. He draws on gendered discourse to link creativity and physical appearance:

> Melvin: *Mia X from No Limit. And she is like pretty much a female gangsta rap artist. And she talks about like being like pretty much down with like whatever. Like her crew is going to do. So like she is like a female [pause]. Like Lil Kim goes off on that a little bit too, but like [pause] it's more overpowering like. The less attractive the rapper is, like that female rapper, the better their lyrics are. So that's what happens.*

The narratives above indicate the ways in which gendered discourses are used in order to present a norm against which Lil Kim is constructed as outside the norm. It is also interesting the way that some of these young men, in particular, listen to gangsta rap, yet do not see it as particularly "nasty."

Reception of gangsta lyrics varied not just on the basis of gender but also in terms of religiosity. Such use of misogynist lyrics in gangsta and hard-core lyrics emerges as a point of tension within the narratives. For Langston, use of such terms as "bitch" is acceptable because it reflects women that exist outside their constructions in rap records:

> *Okay, like there is this song by Tu Pac [pause] like the title of the song is Wonder Why they Call you Bitch? You hear that and you think it's probably some derogatory term, derogatory rap about women . . . . But in this rap he talks about a friend. Like this girl is his friend and she is the kind of girl that you know sleeps around. Like the song is "Do you wonder why they call you bitch? It's because you sleep around so much. All you ever think about is money–you try to get romantic to get their money. And that's why they call you bitch." That's what the song is about. I think that's enlightening. It is true, it's sad but it is true.*
>
> J: *You think it is true!*
>
> Langston: *No, like some women are like that you know.*
>
> J: *Have you met any women like that? //Yeah!// Have you? //Yeah// Where have you met those?*
>
> Langston: *Everywhere, they are everywhere . . . I know a couple. Like a friend of mine, what's his name? [Jo] right. Like this girl came into his house, like she is a friend of a friend. She came to his house and stole like, she robbed him blind. She took his pager, took his money, ran away. What are you going to refer to that woman as? Like I have a friend [John], like he was with a girl who openly confessed that she is only there for his money. Like I know a couple of girls who have sex like every day. Like girls like that–what could you call them?*

Within the women's narratives, such misogynist terms and profanities were not as acceptable. The following young woman indicates why she positioned *Old Dirty Bastard* as unacceptable:

> J: *So what is it about Old Dirty Bastard that makes him hard core?*
>
> Eulyn: *Um, he swears like every second word. //Oh really// Just some of the things he talks about. It seems pointless. You know already. You don't need to–you know.*
>
> J: *Really what sort of things?*
>
> Eulyn: *Like basically the stuff that happens in the States, about all the killings and gangs and all that kind of stuff.*
>
> J: *And you think you know all about that all ready. //Mmuph// How do you know all about that then?*
>
> Eulyn: *'Cuz it's everywhere, you know. It's in the movies, it's on the TV.*

The result of the latter, within the narratives, seems to be a contouring of the reception of rap genres that students identify with. This descriptor in general was associated with love as well as women. The following student positions himself as not particularly liking "soft" music, such as the Blackstreet, because of its perceived repetitiveness:

> Langston: *There's a lot of love going about. So [pause] it's nothing new . . . . It's just the same old, same old. Like a good song but [pause] just [pause] it's not that I am prejudiced against "soft music." Soft music is good. But everybody does it. What sparks my interest is what is different.*

On a continuum defined by "hard rap" at one end and "soft rap" at the other, Will Smith consistently occupied the "soft" category of rap. As such, he was more acceptable to some students who wanted to dissociate themselves from harder forms of rap that consist of swearing and disrespect of women. As a choice in terms of rappers, the narratives below give an example of the ways in which he was positioned by some of the young women. As indicated in Eulyn's narrative above, there was little new to discover in ODB's music. It was predictable. In contrast, Eulyn and other young women viewed Will Smith much more favourably:

> Eulyn: *He is different from everybody else. He is old style. And he has even said himself that he doesn't like to, [pause] he doesn't like the way, um, other rappers demean their own women and stuff like that so he doesn't [pause] do things like that.*

Beats in Music

Originally, hip-hop consisted of the beats created by the DJ, before the addition of an MC rapper on mike. In relation to the study, the narratives reveal that while beat is important, students also indicate a need for variety. This beat is still important in helping students differentiate between different genres of music. Perkins identifies three waves of hip-hop that have washed over North America. The first wave is related to the initial growth of hip-hop, when the beat was most important. Break dancers filled in at the beat in the records, while the MC talked into the mike. Groups such a Kurtis Blow and the Furious Five and Afrika Bambaataa are the most noted here. The second wave of rap can be pinned to the early 1980s. Perkins (1996) suggests that:

> the new personalities of the second wave–Run DMC, L. L. Cool J, and Kool Moe Dee and Big Daddy Kane–epitomised a combination of street style and musical minimalism. More than any other single group or force, Run-D.M.C. catapulted rap into the mainstream. (p. 15)

Although Run-D.M.C. became the biggest crossover into the mainstream, they were also a band whose merger of "black urban street sound and slick pop overlay" was aligned as much with rock music as any other form of music. Nelson George (1998), in tracing the group's lineage, suggested that:

> Starting with "Rock Box" produced by Simmons with Larry Smith, Run-D.M.C. was promoted as a rock band.[5] There was a rebellious, nonconformist attitude in rap that Russell saw as analogous to the rock attitude he experienced hanging out

> at punk clubs like the Mudd Club, Hurrah's, and the Peppermint Lounge in Manhattan. (p. 65)

Perkins' third wave encompasses the growth of gangsta rap, which has come to eclipse more political message rap.

At times, the beats can make a difference in terms of reception. In the following narrative, Omar positions *Tribe Called Quest* as preferable to *Wu-Tang*:

> J: *Oh right. So what makes a Tribe Called Quest your favourite, where as Wu-Tang you appreciate but not necessarily?*
> Omar: *They have every thing. With Wu-Tang, I like what they are saying, but sometimes the beats that they have, I don't know, I don't really like them that much. Or I don't like them, but after a while you are like "Eh, this is not bad." But when its Tribe Called Quest, pretty much everything they have ever put out I've liked. I like the beats the lyrics, like they don't, like Tribe Called Quest is like one of the actual few groups that never talks about . . . being hard core and violent. //Not gangsta?// They are strictly positive. They are completely far away from being gangsta. They are just strictly spiritual.*

Several students, primarily females with Caribbean heritage, indicated that they preferred the beat of reggae or calypso to that of rap, the main advantage being that one could move one's body to the beat. This differentiation may be due to the sample chosen, in that for many of the women, in contrast to the young men, the Caribbean was their geographic area of alignment. In the following narrative, Mirelle indicates a rationale for her preference:

> J: *So why would you prefer calypso over rap?*
> Mirelle: *Calypso is more [pause] enjoyable to listen to. More dancey . . . . You can't dance to rap. Rap is more you bob your head. And you just shake your shoulder, like you move, you don't really dance and stuff.*
> J: *So with calypso then?*
> Mirelle: *You can like move your body, relax, dance. It's more [pause] . . . I could move more to it.*

As indicated by the narratives, the beats, lyrics and grain of voice can evoke pleasure in the listener, and at times, this pleasure seems heightened when all components come together. This coming together with heightened pleasure was captured in the students' narratives by the phrase "going off." For those moments of collective behaviour, the "plaisir" and enjoyment can be seen as linked to the ways in which one shares an emotional experience. Melvin describes the sense of pleasure, that going off entails:

> *I can't say I really feel like any thing. 'Cuz music doesn't affect me that much. It makes me feel happy. If I hear like some guy with a good beat and then like [pause] I like the lyrics, "I go off" and then his voice, it's just like gets me excited and I like get all hyperactive and stuff.*

Repeated across the narratives, the phrase 'going off" was used in a variety of settings. In recent post-structuralist literature (Gilroy, 200; Foucault, 1984; Butler, 1993), the body has been identified as a site of meaning, as a form of language that plays a role in the politics of representation. The way in which the body interacts with the sound of music comes to be represented as a sign of pleasure or displeasure. The metaphor "going off" is used in a variety of ways to describe and explain the emotional elements attached to listening to music. Often going off was experienced in relation to others, in a dance hall, but it could also be experienced while listening alone on a headset. It also implies a way of acting that is reliant upon previous knowledge and experience of a song. In some ways, it implies a social knowledge and familiarity that can lead to heightened pleasure.

For another student, Doreen, her narratives indicate that going off can be a collective as well as individual experience. Here, the "going off" is a sign of collective appreciation:

> J: *I notice that when they touch the floor people go "Eeh." Or cheer or something. Why is that?*
> Doreen: *You know, because it just looks good [pause] right. Like when you touch the floor and stuff. . . I think it gets into it more. I know when I was in my dance group everybody would always "go off" when you touch the floor. It's just a thing in videos [pause] you see them in videos.*

Another student also identifies the collective social element in "going off."

> J: *What sort of songs do you think that people "go off to?"*
> Mirelle: *Songs that are common that everybody knows or they have heard before. Like when they heard it before it's more, it clicks with them, "that's my song." To me, if it's a new tune that I don't really know, I have to catch the tune. Then I can pick up the beat and dance to it. But songs that I usually hear then I'd be like "I know that song. And I can "go off."*

For Omar, it was one specific song in particular that was able to conjure up the process of going off:

> Omar: *Uuh [pause] Ok it's like there's this Mobb Deep song. It's just like [pause] I like the way everything goes. The beats and the lyrics and the way like everything is put together [pause] I just like it. Every time I listen to it. I just like you know, like I have to sing to it type of thing like that. That's one of them. Just like, I don't know. The way everything just comes together in the song it makes*

> *like you know. You know how some songs you like em. because the beat is good. And some songs you appreciate, because the lyrics they are like you know, they make you think. And when those two come together you just like go off.*

Going off crosses genres from rap to reggae to soca. The following narratives describe in detail how specific songs that are known create this sense of exuberance when listening to reggae:

> J: *So give me an example of a reggae group or a reggae song that you can go off to.*
> Doreen: *007. [laugh] "Who am I?"*
> J: *Who am I? Who performs that?*
> Doreen: *Bounty Killa [pause] No! It's Beenie Man, Beenie man.*
> J: *And you really like that? What is it that gets you off then?*
> Doreen: *Oh my goodness. Okay. Now I started talking about that song, I want to hear it. No that song, it's just the how the DJ like [pause] mixes the [pause] mixes the tape and then everybody knows what 's coming on. Right. 'Cuz how the base starts off. 'Cuz everybody is like "Whoa." Everybody just jumps on the floor with their bandanna in their hand, and then they start swaying it. Likes it gets you hyped. Whenever like [pause] you know what song hypes up people when it's Calypso. [pause] Big Truck. Have you heard it?*

Discourses of the Real

The narratives indicate a discourse which positions genuine rap as based upon "real" experiences in life and therefor more "authentic" than rap, which is based upon fantasy–a genre that is geared to a mainstream market and is produced purely for sales. The latter is illustrated in the following narrative that creates a binary between main stream rap: between mainstream rap and authentic rap.

> Eulyn: *But there is the other mainstream rap that's just out there to sell . . . . They rap about something which nobody has ever experienced in their life. They'll say something like, "Oh I have a car that I blew up yesterday." Yeah, they just talk about unrealistic things; you know they talk about things that people want to hear. Like "Oh I have so many women in my house . . . I drink champagne. I make this amount of money, I wear Rolexes, I wear big gold chains, you know. They talk about stuff like that. Everybody wants to hear "oh" everybody is kinda crazy about this Hollywood thing. And that's what commercial rap is. The mainstream stuff, that's the kind of thing that you hear everyday.*
> J. *And "true" rap?*
> Langston: *True rap is just [pause] the expression of one's self. You express yourself, your life. Many, many artists would say that rap is the greatest form of self-expression. It is the one form, the one form of music that the artist [pause] in every song in his album is telling you about his personal experiences.*

This construction of rap is also seen in Tricia Rose's argument that "rappers speak with the voice of personal experience, taking on the identity of the observer or narrator (1994, p. 2). For another student, the understanding of the "real" seems to cohere with the above student's interpretation of what is "true" rap in that it deals with personal experiences. This linking of the real and true in order to elevate certain forms of rap can also be seen in dominant discourses of rap in the US. Perkins (1996) argues that:

> within the daily street reality of urban culture, black and Latino youth practice the value system of being "true to the game." Being "real" and true revolve around the concept of authenticity, not fakery. Public Enemy's rap "Don't Believe the Hype" celebrates the essence of being "real": "the book of the New School rap game/ Writers treat me like Coltrane insane / Yes to them, but to me I am a different kind /We're brothers of the same mind /unblind." (p. 35)

It is this ability to draw on personal experiences that makes the rap song more credible:

> J: *What is it you like about Master P?*
> Frank: *He has a really good style to it. How he goes, he says stuff that can be related to real life. Like from previous experiences and stuff. He just got a new album out called "Master P., The Lie is Done." He is in the new* *Source.* *He is the feature article in the new* *Source*.

When asked to be more specific on what he saw as "real," he indicated that:

> Frank: *He used to be like a drug dealer. And a gangbanger, and one of his brothers died, got killed. So a lot of his songs are always about his brother and how his brother died.*

Realism was seen as something that could be verified by comparison with the material world:

> J: *Can you? So what about the violence then?*
> Omar: *Sometimes it goes too far, but when you, when you put it down to scale, it's like "Yeah, that happens." That type of stuff happens. Somebody is like, somebody goes, loses control over some'et that's stupid like you know, like money. Like when last year Marcus got shot over [pause] tracksuits or whatever the hell it was, it was like stupid. And so there is violence here. And some of the other stuff they talk about. Like girls talking about guys and guys talking about girls, you are like "yeah" that happens.*
> J. *So it relates to your everyday life.*
> Omar: *Like me, it's not every day. But I know people who do have that everyday life.*

This understanding of realism is akin to John Storey's (1996) concept of empiricist realism whereby "a text is considered realist to the extent it adequately reflects that which exists outside itself" (p. 18).

Old School v New School

Rapping can be viewed as a form of storytelling that makes use of rhyming and rhythm to produce narratives, often about personal accomplishments. Originally, they were based in the 1970s and early 1980s on raps and rhymes that were backed by musical samples to enhance their appeal at parties and community venues. The sound and construction of rap is very different in the present day. As with all cultural formations, rap has adopted and adapted itself over the years so that as we enter the twenty-first century, a uniform definition of this social phenomenon becomes problematic. William E. Perkins suggests that there are three waves to hip-hop, and that within those waves various subgenres can be identified. This periodisation of rap appears within the students' narratives as a space of contestation that allows them to position themselves in relation to discourses that surround the descriptors "old school" or "mainstream rap." Such dualism becomes symbolic as the students negotiate meanings in relation to the "real."

Further, it is no surprise to find that within the student narratives, rap is represented as anything but a homogenous genre, revealing instead a variety of subgenres that are important in terms of contouring subjectivity and identities. In line with this reading of rap as complex, Weisband (1995, p. 413) indicates five genres of rap that are drawn on in our analysis of the students' narratives:

> i) *gangsta* –machismo in orientation and includes gang violence drugs and the mistreatment and abuse of women often with explicit or sexual lyrics [e.g. Snoop and Ice T] heavy base is prominent; ii) *hardcore*–focuses on serious political messages aimed at the black community as a whole [Public Enemy]; iii) *reggae rap–ragga or Jamaican ragga*–distinctive reggae style beat and rhythm with the lyrics spoken rather than sung [Snow]; iv) *female rap*–female vocalist emphasising gender solidarity and/or power over men. Strong beat, heavy bass [Salt N Pepa]; v) *East Coast or Daisy Age rap*–used to describe music of *De La Soul*–mellow sound drawing on *Doo Wop* 1960s Soul and Funk. [*PMDawn, A Tribe Called Quest*]

These five genres indicate the complexity of rap music and undermine any attempt to view it as homogeneous. Further, this complexity continues into the lives of the students as they identify with aspects of different genres in the construction of subjectivities–alignments that allow them to say something about themselves.

As Rose (1994) argues, rap draws its energy from the rapper's personal style, skilful use of words, and a reading of multiple social contexts. It also needs to tell a story to have a narrative thread. With the narratives, the issue of realism emerges as important and affects the positioning of self in relation to such a discourse (George, 1998). Lyrics come to define genres of rap so that some forms of rap become constructed as message rap (Wu-Tang) gangsta rap (Snoop) political rap (Public Enemy).

In making distinction between the lyrics of gangsta rap and Puff Daddy's more "playa"-oriented lyrics, Melvin constructs the following narratives. For him gangsta rap involves:

> Melvin: *They like expand their stuff to a whole like different areas that they do. [pause] Like the building and, I don't know, whatever drug they are slanging. About just plain old thugging, like going out and doing whatever, and yeah, they talk about the money they make. And they talk about like um like killing off women and doing this nonsense and that. And, er, like pretty much that's how it goes. But like Puff Daddy and them. They talk about lots to a certain extent only to sound like they are hard you know . . . but pretty much it's just about money and the girls.*

Periodisation was also drawn on in order to compare the past with the present and thus define the "real." Using this process of differentiation, the "past" was used to represent an ideal that is then posited in contrast to the "present." Positioning rap styles of the "past" and "present" as binary opposite thus allows present-day rap to be represented as "the other," and thus outside the boundaries of the self. For the following student, rap was not an attractive genre and was no longer "real" when compared to an earlier era of rap music production. For him, the subject position of Christian contests a reading of present-day rap lyrics as "respectful" and congruent with his own life experiences. It is not a source with which he could identify or draw inspiration. For him, present day rap is a 'fantasy':

> Wayne: *I don't really get it. Some of the times I can't even hear what they are saying. Like most of their words are not . . . it doesn't encourage you, it doesn't do you no good whatever. Like MC Hammer, MC Hammer was a more respectful rapper because he raps reality and stuff. But those boys are just going on with their foolishness.*

Ironically, this latter alignment of the "real" with MC Hammer goes against the grain of other narratives that position Hammer's commercially successful songs as "soft rap." Rap critic Ernest Allen Perkins (1996) suggests that the "Hammer style might be compared to painting by number–a how-to formula lacking creativity, originality and spontaneity" (p. 38).

At times periodisation and genre become intertwined with discourses of reality and commodification. The narratives suggest that the tension between "rap as reality" and "rap as a commodity" is being played out symbolically via the persona of Puff Daddy, a.k.a. Sean Puffy Combs. In what can be seen as a classic discourse, i.e., strongly- bounded statement that constructs ways of understanding and being, Puff Daddy, more than others, is constructed as symbolic of rap's move towards the mainstream via his recycled hits. Such a discourse of blame can be traced not just in the students' narratives but also in the magazines that they read, such as *The Source*, as well as more recently in general newspapers articles[6]. It might be that Puffy was the "crossover" into mainstream and as such did for capitalism what whites could not do–since their "aura" of authenticity was always debatable.

In the following narrative, the student identifies his alignment with the "old school," and assigns Puff Daddy as "new" rap. When asked which kind of rappers he likes, he gives the following response:

> Denzil: *All kind of rappers. Wu-Tang is like my foundation. I like West Side Connection. They also have good, [pause] they flow well and everything. KRS -One. All the older, all the old school guys. Cool Moe Dee, Curtis Blow and all those guys, they are all "old school."*
> J: *Who are the new school?*
> Denzil: *Puff Daddy.*

For another student, it was Puff Daddy's lyrics that were seen as lacking in realism and concentrating purely on his material possessions, in contrast to a rapper such as Master P.[7]:

> Frank: *Lot of rappers rap about [pause] just whatever, and it doesn't appeal to me like, "Oh yeah. same o, same o." Like Puff Daddy and them, I like them, but all they rap about practically is how much money they have, what kind of cars they drive, it's like "who cares?"*
> J: *So why is that not interesting for you? 'Cuz is that not what he has?*
> Frank: *Well it is interesting to me a little bit, but I don't find it as [pause] as I don't like it as much as I like Master P.'s I guess.*
> J: *Does Master P., just talk about himself or does . . .*
> Frank: *He talks about everything, black people. His one song, "Black and White" he says, "Why is Tommy Hilfiger discriminating on us, but I understand it because black people don't buy black-owned clothes." Then he goes off and he talks 'bout how they killed Martin Luther King and all kinds of stuff like that.*

At times Puff Daddy's beats were also challenged in the students' narratives:

> *It's the same with Puff Daddy //Puff Daddy // Well about the beats thing–just like how he takes like hits from the '80s and makes it sound so crazy and like takes like old school beats that like everyone like heard before and then like . . . a lot of like nostalgia like . . . and all this nonsense, and people start reminiscing and like listening to the beats again. That's all he does is making money off of recycled beats.*

Rap as Commodity

Discourses of commodification that emerge within the narratives highlight the ways in which blackness as a signifier articulates within a wider capitalist economic structure to produce racialised meanings in relation to rap. Keith Negus (1996) argues that the music production and consumption is a business based upon a profit margin, and should be understood as a commercial enterprise driven by the profit margin (p. 37). Thus any understanding of rap music has to take into account that music production is not purely a matter of aesthetics. It becomes part of a wider capitalist production, something to make money from. As such, production of rap becomes intertwined with racialised and aesthetic meanings that lead to positioning on issues that might, on the surface, be perceived as not related. Interestingly, a positioning of selves in relation to discourses of appropriation and commodification took place primarily in relation to rap. Few of the narratives reveal a critique of the ways in which other genres of black-identified music, such as reggae, jazz or r&b, have been commodified by corporate capitalism. Nelson George, African American music critic argues that:

> . . . white-dominated industry has instituted the conglomerate control of black music and that the pressure to "crossover" . . . has forced performers to modify their music to became acceptable to white audiences. This crossover is at times perceived as weakening the links of African American rappers with their authentic musical selves. A dilution of their. (1998)

It is by this linking of blackness and authenticity that hip-hop and rap has been able to capture the sign of blackness as fixed. As hooks (1992) argues, a host of black men in the public domain "blindly exploit the commodification of blackness and the concomitant exotification of phallocentric black masculinity" (p. 102).

At times, discourses of commodification link with realism to position rappers as "real" or not. For the following student, the issues of commodification are played out across the physical bodies of rap artists. Discourses of biology and aesthetics become intertwined and racialised so that subjection of the student to such discourses produces the social effect of constraining her listening choices. In this case, he finds it difficult to listen to rap music produced by a white artist. In response to a direct question as to whether white people rapping was a way of sharing culture, the following narratives emerged:

> Frank: *It's not sharing it really, but it's trying to. But people just don't allow it. They won't accept it. Most people won't //You don't think so?// No. Like remember when Vanilla Ice came out, he was all popular. When people find out he is white,*

> *everybody is like "oh" [subdued] then they stopped talking. I used to sing him all the time, and finally I stopped rapping him. And that's how it was.*

Again, Frank's analysis identifies Vanilla Ice[8] as non-black and therefore not authentic/not real. The narratives also indicate the ways in which social pressure and other discursive practices can operate to discipline the subject within a specific discourse. As an example of the public discourse surrounding the acceptability of Vanilla Ice as a rapper, we can note the following rap penned by Del Tha Funkee Homosapien in response to "Ice" mania. "Ice is cool, but I can't stand Vanilla/Because he takes a style and tries to mock it/Ain't nuthin' personal G/But I am kinda into chocolate" (Perkins, 1996, p. 36). In questioning Frank more closely, he drew on an economic discourse with traces of black nationalism, to highlight the material position of blacks as an economically-disadvantaged group:

> Frank: *Yeah just 'cuz he is white.*
> J: *So what is it about white then?*
> Frank: It's just like [pause] I don't know. I guess. No body has the [pause]
> J: *So what is it that makes a black rapper different from a white rapper?*
> Frank: *I guess 'cuz you are like trying to support him and you be like [pause] I guess you feel that could be an opportunity for a black person to have a good position or get some money or something or something. But when you see it's a white person, your whole perspective just changes, I don't know why. //Oh really? // I don't know why. But I remember. I'd be embarrassed to sing and dance after I found that Vanilla Ice was white.*

For Frank, rap is a symbolic form that has what John Thompson (1990) defines as economic value, " the value that symbolic forms acquire by virtue of being offered for exchange in a market." He continues, "when symbolic forms are subjected to economic valorisation, they become commodities . . . symbolic goods which can be bought, sold or otherwise exchanged in a market" (p. 13). In this instance, the rappers can be perceived as selling "reality"–their experiences of poverty and violence. This ability to commodify experiences can also be seen in the ways in which it is easier for some bodies to be accepted as authentic rappers, while others are not. The following narratives identify how, for Omar, listening to and identifying with white rappers is a complex process that illustrates the economic intersections of race and class with political and economic unity. For him, this process of commodification was racialised with the definition of "authentic" black musical styles tied into "exchange value" within the larger white community. For Omar, a rapper's experiences are an economic commodity that can be sold:

> *Well the thing about rap is kinda different. Well, actually any type of music. Country music even. You know how there is a stereotype that a country music singer has to live in the country. Rap singer [pause] has to be black. It's not [pause] people take the stereotype too far, it's just the fact that rap music is about [pause] like pause] zzz*

> *oh how can I explain it? [pause] talking about what you live. So [pause] then, the reason that most of the rappers are black is 'cuz it was created like say of the like say New York, wherever. I think it was created in New York. But that's where most of the violent things that happen–that's where they are. That's why rap music is so violent nowadays. But that's why the rap culture is like that, because that's what those black people are experiencing. So for somebody to come from outside to make their own sell out of it, it's like [pause] you are trying to steal what they own. You know. So you probably wouldn't take to, you probably wouldn't like it too much. So that's the way I feel about it. The reason black people want to keep rap to themselves is because it's something that they all relate to with themselves. And it's not like there aren't white rappers.*

This alignment of specific signifiers with specific types of music in order to codify such musical representations as authentic is not unique to rap. It can also be seen in other genres of music. Sim (1998) explains this social process as one in which:

"authenticity" can be seen to be constructed as one more style: values of truth and authenticity will be set up in the dress codes and style of singing of performers (folk singers do not wear pin-stripe suits), perhaps in the instruments they play (for example, acoustic instruments tend to signify such values better that electronic instruments) (p. 142).

As Omar continues his narratives, he also highlights that it is possible for other ethnic and racialised rappers to become in some sense "real":

> Omar: *There are a lot of white rappers. But the reason that they are accepted is because they go through the same stuff.*
> J: *Right. So there are some white rappers that are accepted. //Yeah. // Such as?*
> Omar: *There is this guy called Milk Bone. Came out a while ago. I haven't*
> J: *Called what? //Milk Bone// well that's a good name for a white rapper.*
> Omar: *I don't know. He was out awhile ago. I forgot. And there is a lot of like Spanish rappers too. Like Spanish Harlem. You ever heard of Spanish Harlem? //Yeah// Like there is Cubans, Cuban Lynx, stuff like that. Rap isn't just black. It's just that to be able to rap in that, to be able to be fully appreciated as a rapper, by all different, by all the rap industry, you should live the life that you are talking about. So like to try and take it from anywhere outside of that life is just like stealing a baby's candy or something.*
> J: *So it's the life? // Yeah// that makes it what it is.*
> Omar: *It's 'cuz everyone around the rap community can relate to what's being said. So if some urban kid with a whole bunch of money tries to rap for no reason, it's just like "What you doing? You trying to steal ours. Like this is ours, leave it alone.*

Omar's narrative constructs lived experience as paramount, in terms of being "real"; a positioning from which it is then possible to extrapolate that if white rappers "rap" about their experiences, then they might be acceptable to blacks. However, "experience" is not an "open" concept that allows easy adoption by middle class white rappers, since the strength of the discourse lies in the recalling of experiences of poverty, violence, and gender relations. In the following narrative, class is constructed as a variable that can cut across racialised experiences and thus problematise the reception of rap:

> Denzil: *Getting the message is not being black, it's just getting the message is more personal. Nothing to do with the colour you are. 'Cuz I guess that if you were a poor kid growing, a white kid growing up poor, I guess you could hear the same message if you wanted to. It's if you want to hear the message or not. It's why you listen to the music I guess.*

William Perkins (1996) positions himself in a similar way to the latter narrative. For him it is possible for white rappers to be seen as "real." He argues that 3rd Bass, now defunct, earned "the acceptance and praise of black rappers . . . [C]omposed of two Brooklyn kids, MC Search and Prime Minister Pete Nice, who staked a claim to the black urban male style" (1996, p. 39). Perkins continues: 3rd Bass's attitude and rap style were shaped and nurtured by the cultural codes of black masculinity. Brash and speedy, rap was their way out, as they recalled in "Product of the Environment":

> In the heart of the city, you was born and bred
> You grew up smart or you wound up dead
> And your savior was a rhyme and a beat
> in a rap group
> A modern day production of the city street. (1996, p. 36)

Thus, as a genre rap music has a value that can be traded on the wider economic market. Although on the surface the tension is around authenticity, further analysis of the discourse suggests that what is for sale is the experience of blacks–a heightened representation that attempts to become defined as the "real." This definition of the real also acts back upon itself as a stereotype. The very images of phallocentric black masculinity that are glorified and celebrated in rap music, videos, and movies are the representations that evoked when white supremacists seek to gain public acceptance and support for genocidal assault on black men, particularly youth (hooks 1992, p. 109).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the music consumption of the students. In response to Gerald's comment at the end of the chapter five, that African-American culture is the dominant culture in Canada, I have examined the students' narratives to ascertain what sorts of cultural forms they identify with, purchase, and listen to. The narratives reveal that the students position themselves in relation to what they identify as black music. On closer examination of the descriptor black music, it seems to be performed by peoples of African descent and, in terms of production, based in the US. Although there was a stronger musical identification by the young women, with music associated with the "small" islands in the Caribbean as opposed to the "big" island of Jamaica, most of the music was produced in the United States.

In terms of music genres, r&b and rap were the most mentioned. The narratives indicate that from gangsta thorough to "soft" or lovers, the students consume all genres of rap, from "message" to "gangsta." Misogyny is explored through their narratives, to indicate how they place themselves in relation to and through various misogynist phrases that they use during social interaction. I am developing an understanding not only of how the students relate to rap but also how they code a musical genre whose main point of commodification is selling experiences vicariously. My analysis of the phrase "going off" reveals it to be a site of pleasure that students can achieve through participation in music. By participation, I mean listening or dancing. This state of "joy" or "bliss" can also be achieved individually or collectively.

Beat of the music is important to those who listen to rap, as are the lyrics. Many of the students indicate that it is the lyrics and the way that they relay a story that catch their attention in terms of listening. In terms of ascertaining what symbolic meanings are produced though rap, I analyze their narratives and how they transfer phrases and codes from music to their everyday lives (see chapter 11). Beat also captures the self when listening to dance hall reggae. A much heavier beat than that associated with Bob Marley's more "spiritual" reggae, dance hall is similar to gangsta rap in that both genres draw their legitimacy from relaying their experiences within specific geographic and social locations. Students from the Caribbean consumed this musical form most fully, although some students with no links to Jamaica or the Caribbean claimed that the heavy patois in which the lyrics are delivered prevented full consumption.

In terms of my overall thesis, the data presented will help me identify how rap is used in the everyday lives of the students, especially with regard to relations of domination. As well, I try to ascertain how rap that is produced in Canada is consumed in relation to cultural forms produced in the US.

In the next chapter, I will analyse the hood genre of films and place it in relation to *Set it Off*, a female rebuttal of the hood genre. As well, I analyse the students' narratives in relation to representations of blackness.

Notes

---

[1] "'Breakin' was a set of specific dance moves done on playgrounds and club dance floors in the late 1970s and early 1980s; form twists and spins, headstands, and elaborately orchestrated footwork to the standard individual dance moves of " 'top rockin' and up-rockin'." (Perkins, p.15)

[2] Tricia Rose's book *Black Noise* (1994) provides a useful analysis of the emergence of hip-hop and it cultural implications. In particular Chapter 2 "'All Aboard the Night Train'-Flow, Layering and Rupture in Postindustrial New York" gives a good political and economic analysis of the development of hip-hop.

[3] Stanley Cohen in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* defines a moral panic as "a condition episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (p.9)

[4] Angela McRobbie's work on dance hall culture in the U.K. is useful in analyzing the ways such locations operate as sites for social formations.

[5] In Rick Rubin, Simmons found a partner who shared his vision of "rap as rock" Rubin "reduced" rap tracks, moving the music away from the R&B that supported Kurtis Blow and the Furious Five to a hard, stark aural assault with the antecedents in AC/DC's "Back in Black" and Billy Squier's "The Big Beat" (George, 1998, pp.65-66).

[6] Larry McShane in an Edmonton Journal article on January 25, 2000 suggests that many anti-Puffy websites are prevalent. According to the article Puffy was the "king of rap crossing over into the mainstream" (Edmonton Journal, 25 January 2000 C1).

[7] This alignment of hip-hop with overt symbols of capitalism are not unusual within the genre. "Hip-hop is the only art form that celebrates capitalism openly.... Rap's unabashed materialism distinguishes it sharply from some of the dominant musical genres of past century." "These guys are so real, they brag about money," says Def Jam's Simmons. They don't regret getting a Coca-Cola deal. They brag about a Coca-Cola deal (Farley, Feb 8th 1999:47).

[8] Rose (1994) argues that the importance of authenticity, via black lived experiences, to reception of rap was highlighted by the Vanilla Ice's embellishment of his past to include experiences of growing up with African Americans.

Chapter 7

Films and Regimes of Representation

Films are not necessarily good because black people make them. They are not necessarily 'right-on' by virtue of the fact that they deal with the black experience. (Williamson, 1996, p. 173)

Introduction

As stated in chapter six, representations connect meaning and language to culture. They are an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged. As with the rap music genre discussed in the previous chapter, we can analyse the students' narratives to see the ways in which they perceive and receive various representations of blackness via film texts. Like rap music, films are part of that visual repertoire through which "difference" and blackness are represented at this historical moment. They are part of a racialized regime of representation. In this chapter, I analyse the students' reception of the "hood" movie genre. The rationale for the latter is that the phrase "the hood" has become a powerful signifier in present-day youth culture. It has developed consequent symbolic meanings that extend beyond the pleasure, or not, of watching the movies. I also discuss music videos as popularised on TV programs such as *RapCity*.

Films

The students' narratives indicate that no commercially-produced films portraying the lived experiences of African Canadians had been viewed by any of the students interviewed. This may well be due primarily to a lack of easy access to such Canadian produced films as *Rude*, or *Soul Survivor*. In comparing distribution patterns, both these films are not as widely distributed or as accessible to the public as other, more mainstream films. As well, the US economic dominance of the Canadian film industry via multimedia giants constrains the Canadian film industry in general as it struggles to maintain a distinctive sense of self under the deluge of output from the United States. In fact, large media corporations control the films they make available for viewing and thus structure the choices that are made available to students. Although the National Film Board of Canada has produced documentary films such as *The Road Taken* or *Speak It!*, highlighting the lived experiences of African Canadians, none of these films are discussed within the students' narratives.

Other films, classified as mainstream in the sense that they are watched by a larger segment of the population and are distributed more widely by large media corporations, are enjoyed by the students, despite such films' lack of overt black experiences within the plot. Among the variety of mainstream films cited in the students' narratives were *Titanic, Face Off, Donnie Brasco* and *Braveheart.* It is important to recognise that although discussion entails the students' reception of specific film texts, this reception takes place within a socio-economic structure contoured by globalized capitalism[1].

During the interviews a variety of films was discussed, either in response to open- ended questions, or more focussed questions initiated by the interviewer to elicit the reception of specific film texts. These discussions of films were undertaken in order to raise issues of receptivity in general and, more specifically, to discuss receptivity intertextually to discourses of blackness. Among the films discussed were *Set it Off, Soul Food, Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Amistad, Waiting to Exhale, Being a Playa'* and *Booty Call,* a variety of genres reflecting gender, sexuality, and racialized themes.

With regard to the latter films, the narratives highlight how issues of representations become linked with questions of "reality" in terms of the portrayal of African American experiences. In particular, the hood films evoked narratives that indicated a theoretical tension hinged on whether the constructed reality was mimetic of an external reality that exists in the US. Joy's narratives lay out an understanding of the genre and its consequent influence on North American youth culture:

> *Boyz N the Hood was good, so was Menace II Society. And then there was like all those kinda movies that kinda followed it. But Boyz N the Hood was like that first one that came out where like it was by John Singleton. That was kinda like the first one that like the reason that movie did so good and why I think a lot of people liked it was because it was like a new idea. Just like when Aliens first came out. They like started that idea, and it was "bad." But then when people keep trying to copy it and make--it gets kinda repetitious. It's like the idea is done, tired. It's tired out. Leave it.*

For many students, the constructions of black youths' lives in the US, as portrayed in films such as *Boyz N the Hood,* and *Menace II Society,* were perceived as congruent with the "real" conditions that young, black Americans encountered.

As Gerald indicates when speaking of *Boyz N the Hood*:

> Gerald: *What actually happened is what actually happens in the States.*

Or, as Joy reveals:

> *Boyz N the Hood was a very good movie. I liked it. It was sad, but that's how they have it down there. It was like realistic in some aspects, like the shootings and stuff. Like there's a lot of drive-by shootings down there, and I think that when that movie came out it was like it kind a showed the public this isn't a pretty scene.*

In a similar vein, Etta's narratives highlight the movies as good and realistic, thus enabling a sympathetic identification with black Americans:

> Etta: *They are good movies. They are sad. I think it's realistic. It's sad. More goes on there [in the US] than what we really know. We don't live in the States, we don't live in those areas, and we don't really see. Thing is, when you see them lots of people say "Oh these are gangstas and stuff." They don't realise that these people felt that this is the only choice that they have. They don't know the background. Or the whole story. Lot of people put them down. And look down on them. And I supposed that you can for what they do, but they don't make much of--even in the States to help.*

So it is that for Denzil the hood films were a source of knowledge, an eye-opener about the real United States, even if at times he saw the constructions as prone to exaggeration:

> *They're, they're good movies. They are eye-opening especially [for] white America. They go, "That's what it's really like?" And a lot of times it is. But some movies go a bit overboard. Like its good to take a little bit of realism into it. But they are just trying to put all the sorrow and all the bad things that can happen in the hood into two hours and four minutes or whatever. So they are good movies; they can be almost educational. Yeah, they are good movies. I like them. I don't watch them for the sake of watching the movie. I watch them for something else.*

As he continues to elaborate on the "something else" for which he watches such films, Denzil indicates a degree of ambivalence in terms of his identification. He recognises that he cannot know fully what life is like in these inner city areas:

> *Just like, I don't know, identification. Something like that. Just to see what's going on. 'Cuz I don't, obviously. I don't live there, so I don't know what it's totally like. And at the same time that's not a very good way to try and identify--through a screen. You should go and live there. But I wouldn't want to.*

For Phyllis, identification of realism within the film also led to ambivalence and the need to make a distinction between Canadian experiences and experiences in the US.

> Phyllis: *I guess, I guess for an American, like black teen, it'd be almost accurate. 'Cuz that's like an everyday part of life for them. Like a lot of them live in the projects and stuff. //Right// Like maybe that is an everyday part of life. But for someone like me, that's not. So I guess for them it would be more realistic.*

Not all students see the representation of inner city life in *Boyz N the Hood* as realistic. For Langston, the film's portrayal of the lives of black youths was funny rather than real. In response to a request to elaborate on his use of funny:

> *Funny peculiar and "ha, ha" sometimes. When you look at something that you have absolutely no idea why it's happening, it's funny to you. If it's real to you, it wouldn't be funny. When I watched it, it wasn't real to me. So it was funny, it was like "oh good movie" It was a sad ending. Didn't make me cry or nothing. It was just, oh, sad the guy had to die when he was about to leave. It was nothing big.*

For another student, Omar, lived experiences were important in deciding on the degree of realism portrayed in *Boyz N the Hood*:

> *I've never grown up in the ghetto, so I can't tell you whether it's realistic or not. But from what you see in statistics and stuff like that, it' s probably true.*

For him, other empirical evidence was necessary to substantiate the degree of realism in the genre.

What is evident by its absence in the narratives and the hood films, is that the black identity constructed by and through these discussions is a male black identity. The experiences highlighted within many of the hood genre are very much a masculinist interpretation of black life in the US. Although the term black is used as a universal descriptor for the characters in the movies, the experiences that are highlighted are very much those of young males. Such masculinist orientations have been noted by cultural critics such as hooks (1992) and Mercer (1994), both of whom have suggested that male-centred genres such as *Boyz N the Hood, Menace II Society, Juice,* etc. offer primarily masculinist and sexist portrayals of women. Women are constructed solely as sexual objects and nurturers–there as background for the males to play out their roles. Further, Canadian theorist Rinaldo Walcott (1997) argues, "in these narratives of blackness, black women, gays, lesbians, and anyone who does not toe the line of narrowly-defined blackness are considered unimportant" (p. 124). This consequent and consistent erasure of women and gays not only reinforces the constructions of blackness as male and heterosexual but also contours understandings of reality. When analysed, it was noticeable that many of the narratives referred to, and linked discourses of reality and the real with representations of lived experiences of black youths in the inner city. In terms of giving meaning to various texts, this issue of reality was important. If linked with black identity, it allows us to analyse how the films that the students watch construct blackness.

This concept of reality"becomes important in defining the acceptability of filmic texts for the students and is most evident in their assessment and reception of films such as *Set it Off*. Placing the student's narratives on *Set it off* in relation to the more male- centred films in the genre highlights many of the tensions alluded to by Walcott (1997), above. Such relational analysis is important, since viewers often placed genres of film and television programs in relation to each other by viewers. As Tony Thwaites et al., (1994) argue, such an emphasis on genre is important because:

> In addition to counteracting any tendency to treat individual texts in isolation from others, an emphasis on genre can also help to counteract the homogenisation of the medium which is widespread in relation to the mass media, where it is common, for instance, to find assertions about "the effects of television," regardless of such important considerations as genre. (p. 92)

Set it Off, in contrast to male-centred, films portrays four female friends who live in the ghetto and are trying to survive economically. The story deals with the ways in which economic circumstances drive the women to rob a bank where one of them was previously employed. The story attempts to present itself as a more woman-centred response to the more male-dominated hood film genre. Its representations, read connotatively, can be viewed as an attempt to stymie criticism that hood films portray women as epi-phenomenal to the main action within the films, i.e., as objects rather than subjects.

Although the conditions of inner city experiences represented via masculinist "hood" films were acceptable as "real' representations, in *Set it Off*, the experiences of four young women living in the inner city, was open to much more scrutiny as to its realism. Tthis questioning of the realism of *Set it Off* highlights the ways in which discourses of black youth culture have positioned black men and black women differently within a genderized discourse. The students who discussed the film positioned themselves in a variety of ways, but for many, the representation of women within the film was not seen as congruent with "gender reality" and actual experience:

> Etta: *It was good, actually. Um, that was kind of sad. It was not really that realistic. But it was and it wasn't.*

Or for Gerald:

> *Yes. The story line was like kind of hard to believe, like it could happen so.*
> J: *How do you think it was hard to believe?*
> Gerald: *'Cuz like four girls robbing a bank. It's just a hard thing to believe.*
> J: *How is that?*
> Gerald: *I don't know. 'Cuz it's probably never happened before.*
> J: *How come?*
> Gerald: *Just probably never happened. You wouldn't think of like four women robbing a bank and getting away with it. You just wouldn't think it would happen. But it could happen, so . . . .*

Or for Omar:

> *Robbing a bank is not something you see a lot of ladies doing. So I think that's what that movie was supposed to be. I don't think there is any thing like any true meaning of life to it.*

For Frank, the representations of women were incongruent with representations of women that he had encountered:

> *I liked it. But I thought it was fake, 'cuz first of all, I couldn't see Queen Latifah as a lesbian. And then four women like that wouldn't have the self-esteem to do that. It's not possible.*

For Gerald, this incongruity between "known reality" and filmic representation did not affect enjoyment of the film which, in comparison to *Boyz N the Hood,* was rated as better. As he explains:

> *It was just like–I don't know why I liked it, it was just like a better film I guess, better production and everything. The film was just better. To me, at least.*

Unlike other students who like congruity between their known reality and the representation on film, Gerald found that the gap between the representation of his known reality and the filmic representation made the film more interesting. The pleasure for him is that the film goes against the grain of other films within the genre.

> Gerald: *That they put women that were like bad that would rob a bank just made it more interesting.*

Although Gerald's narratives might imply a gendered receptivity of *Set it Off,* it was not a reception based on binary opposites, of male interpretation versus female interpretation. Many of the young women's narratives also indicate incongruity between their known reality and the filmic representation:

> Mirelle: *I thought it was pretty jokey. Four women try to rob a bank.*
> J: *How is that jokey?*
> Mirelle: *Not jokey, but like kind of like, um, like kind of "woody"? I don't know. I thought it was a good movie, personally, but it's just like any other movie when they want to rob a bank, I guess.*

Highlighting differences is an important aspect in terms of meaning making and in making a distinction between categories. Eulyn highlighted various differences within the genre of hood films:

> Eulyn: *Compared to* *Boyz N the Hood**, it's not as "rough" I guess. Because there was like, three of them were just girls who lived in like say a bad area. But they had like education, stuff like that, except for a couple of them. Compared to* *Boyz N theHood**, where there wasn't much education around.*

The above narrative, while constructing black women as educated, relationally constructs black men as uneducated and, consequently, reinforces a sense of the importance of education in terms of making black women economically mobile and able to escape the inner city. The representations of black male identity are linked with uneducated roughness. Female identity is regarded as soft, despite the criminal activity undertaken within the film.

This positioning of black male identity as different from and more disadvantaged than black female identity is also evident in Mirelle's narratives. For her, gendered and raced aspects were factors used to differentiate between the two interpretations and constructions of meaning:

> Mirelle: *Yeah. I think that movie is different from the rest of them. 'Cuz it could be like four white women robbing a bank, and they get caught the same way, and like one survives and . . . .*
> J: *But you think that* *Menace* *was different. Couldn't it be just four white guys?*
> Mirelle: *It would be different, 'cuzs I think, I've never really pictured white guys growing up in a hood kind of thing. I know some of them grow hard and rough in different–but not the way black people– like made as if they grew up with the hardest kind of thing. They grew up to live, like a rough life. Tough, hard life.*

The construction of black identity within these youth-cultural products is one that orchestrates black male experience of the world through a more consistently racialized lens than that of black females. Etta's narratives highlight this predominance of black male experiences when, in discussing a scene in *Set it Off*, she uses the male experiences in the film discuss the experiences of blacks in both Toronto and the US:

> *Remember how they set him up? And the police just shot him down just like that? Things like that do happen now and then. Even in Toronto, like if you read, they had problems with it once in awhile where they want people to check into things. 'Cuz they don't think there is any reason for them to be killed. And when it gets that high, like percentage gets that high, like talking about the papers, sometimes I wonder myself why a sixteen-year-old kid would just kill. I can't see them being that much of a threat. Like sometimes it is true, they are. But when the percentages get that high, as opposed to other races especially, I begin to wonder.*

The way that gender becomes subsumed to racialized meanings, that black women are represented as having more experiences in common with white women than black men have with white men, is also attendant within these narratives. Within the narratives, class as a social relation is erased and replaced by an overemphasis on black masculinity as a signifier for disadvantaged. Such understandings of oppression as a hierarchy can be traced to other discourses that are internal and external to the black- defined community (hooks, 1992). It is a contouring of meanings that positions black men as more disadvantaged than black women. What is also interesting is the way that in terms of identification, there is no clear gender demarcation. Both the young women and men adhere with a discourse of black male disadvantage in relation to females.

The narratives also highlight the ways in which films such as *Set if Off* are polysemic–capable of signifying multiple meanings. Whereas interpretations of reality and male identity might cohere within some narratives, interpretations by the students can also collide as they fill in textual spaces or leave gaps through which meaning can develop. The automatic acceptance of blackness and black identity represented through media images thus becomes much more problematic. In speaking of the reception of films, Manthia Diawara (1996) argues that "every narration places the spectator in a position of agency; race, class, and sexual relations influence the way in which this subjecthood is filled by the spectator" (p. 293). I would add to Diawara's set of relations, religious beliefs. Thus Eulyn, whose narrative position her as religious, drew on such discourses to give meanings to the film *Set it Off*- meanings that the interviewer had overlooked. For Eulyn the most glaring representation in the film was the portrayal of rap musician Queen Latifah as a lesbian[2]; sexuality rather than gender was a primary factor in her critique of the films realism. Positioning herself within a fundamentalist religious discourse contested her ability to accept lesbians as "natural." For her *Set it Off* was problematic:

> Eulyn: *I didn't, I didn't really enjoy it [the film].*
> J: *Why was that?*
> Eulyn: *Because of Queen Latifah.*
> J: *Oh she was the one with the car?*
> Eulyn: *Yeah. She was portraying a lesbian. That's why I didn't like it.*
> J: *Oh didn't you? How was that?*
> *Eulyn: Because like she was actually portraying a lesbian, you know what I mean.*
> J: *She was acting out the part?*
> Eulyn*: That's what I mean?*
> J: *Explain a bit more.*
> Eulyn: *Why I didn't like it? //Yeah// it's just wrong. I don't think it's supposed to be like that. And it's just the story was all kind of pointless. Cos they all get shot… And then she goes somewhere and she is running the streets for the rest of her life with money. What's that?*

However, Mirelle, whose narratives overlooked the sexuality of Queen Latifah's character was willing, when asked directly, to accept Latifah's positioning as a lesbian in the film and identified different sexual orientations as part of portraying "reality" and "natural" life:

> Mirelle: *I guess they were just trying to portray like everybody had their natural life. Like one lady was struggling, trying to take care of her brother. One had a young kid trying to raise her up on her own and she was like any other one of them. She was a lesbian.*

In response to a query concerning how she reconciled her religious beliefs with such an openness to differing sexual orientations she responded with a qualifier:

> *I think that's wrong. Like I don't believe in it kind of thing but I wouldn't judge them because I mean you just don't judge people by if that's how they are then I guess I am not going to like clap for them but I am not going to like put them down kind of thing*

In this instance, Mirelle's response indicates the existence of competing discourses around the issue of sexual orientation. Whereas her religious upbringing would suggest that lesbianism is 'wrong" other more liberal discourses of equality compete with such an understanding to produce an "ambivalence" in her response.

For Gerald, the ability to make a distinction between Queen Latifah's portrayal of a lesbian on screen and her off-screen personae as heterosexual enabled an acceptance of the film:

> Gerald: *I think she is a good actor in it. She just did a good job of acting. ... I don't know it was kind of ... like cos she was gay and everything. It's kind of like nasty. But like she ... still did a good job of acting.*

Yet, in contrast, Frank found that his ability to differentiate Queen Latifah's off screen personae from her role made the film even less acceptable:

> *Ah...couldn't stand it. ... I can't imagine her like that. So that's why I like couldn't stand that. And that's like a stupid thing to add to the movie. What was the point?*

Omar's narratives construct the addition of a lesbian character in the most receptive terms:

> *It's not like it doesn't happen. There's a lot of lesbians out there. And she was black too.... It's, ... part of ordinary life. But that's another aspect of life too so you can't hate it ... It's what happens.*

As well the students' narratives used the hood films relationally, to give meaning to other film genres and to construct what would be an ideal representation of blackness. Thus Joy highlights in relation to hood films and the more recent genre of youth comedy sex films such as *Booty Call* or *Being a Playa?* What would be an ideal type of representation of blacks within a movie?:

> *One thing that I would like to see with a black movie is that it's not always about the shooting or something like that, but you know how you see a lot of white people, they always play in like movies like not necessarily an action movie but dramas, like we still have some dramas right, but I mean like even stories to do with corporate America. But I'd like to see black people put into that position. Something away from the shooting and the sex. Something totally different, but just with black people. That's what I would like to see. 'Cuz white people do that. You see them with a whole bunch of movies, and people don't say nothing.*

In a similar vein, Doreen's narrative constructs *Soul Food* as more positive in relation to the hood movies:

> *I think it made them look good. Because you know, you see some like, "Okay, I'll be ruthless." You know, "gangsta" movies–I really don't like that type of movies because they make black people, they don't look good. Like I don't like it at all. Because they make it look, and like, I know that maybe like when some white people see that movie or what ever, they'd be like "Oh black people are just out to kill people now," stuff like that. I don't like movies like that, because there is too much killing, too much swearing. I don't like to see movies like that.*

While the hood films were often discussed in terms of their representation of black life in US inner cities, other films, such as *Soul Food*, and *Waiting to Exhale*, were constructed as able to represent the experiences of all women or families, not just black women and black families. *Soul Food* highlights an African-American family, and *Waiting to Exhale* highlights the often-negative experiences of African-American women with African- American men. Phyllis, in discussing *Waiting to Exhale*, explains the universality of experiences represented:

> *Okay, let me explain. It doesn't just portray like black women. 'Cuz not only black women have those problems. You know, like everybody has those problems. Everybody is in love with someone, but they just can't have them. Sometimes it happens.*

Or, for Langston discussing the same film:

> *Yeah, it was a good movie. It was a true story. Not like, probably wasn't a real-life story, but it was true. It was realistic.*
> J: *Which bits were realistic?*
> Langston: *You know, like the woman with her man leaving her.*

In ascertaining the meanings of hood films as constructed in the narratives of the students, one finds that the US-mediated representations of black youth culture are not automatically and passively consumed by black youths in Alberta. Instead, meanings are constructed in varying ways that often intersect with not just gender and race, but also sexuality.

Television & Music Videos

Rap music videos offer a third aspect of the repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which difference and blackness are represented in the lives of the students. Again, rap music, reception is highlighted to indicate the ways in which students position themselves in relation to the visual texts and thus secure certain subject positions. These televisual texts are against a background where Canadian television is subsumed by US television productions. Representation of blacks on Canadian television programs is scant, and exploration of these narratives is through television programs created for an audience in the United States. As one student argued, there are "not many Canadian programs, and they are not very popular.[3]" Thus, representation of black experiences should be recognised as African American.

The narratives indicate that TV watching occurs for a variety of reasons. For some students, it is an activity to be undertaken when nothing else is available. For others, it is a pleasurable experience not to be missed. Reception of television texts varied across and between genres and was often dependent upon the type of program and the social use to which such a text could be put. Soap operas such as *Young & Restless*, *ER*, and *Days of Our Lives* were, according to the narratives of the young women in particular, programs not to be missed. The structuring of the latter as serials contoured their receptivity. Such programs were seen as both unpredictable and predictable. Such a position of ambiguity often adds to the appeal of such genres as "multiple enigmas are initiated, developed and resolved at different rates, and so the viewer's curiosity is in constant state of arousal" (Gillespie, 1995, p. 161). While Gillespie's postulation holds true for many students, some students indicated that they have learned the formula for this genre. It has become predictable to such an extent that it no longer causes a "constant state of arousal."

It is also interesting to note the degree of ambivalence in terms of the students' responses to television. Unlike the common-sense understandings within society, which stereotypes students as passive "dupes" "sucking up the dross" of television, the students narratives were actually quite specific about what they liked to watch. Often, demands created by part-time work or school work acted as constraining circumstances in their ability to watch television freely. In many ways the narratives suggest that television *per se,* no longer offers an attraction as it perhaps did for an earlier generation of youth. Several of the narratives construct television as a medium that could be "taken" or "left"– a choice that intersects with the development of media technology.

> Phyllis: *I don't sit at home and watch TV. Like people like sit on a couch and vegetate and watch movies and stuff. Like yeah, I may do that on a weekend when I have nothing else better to do.*

Or

> Melvin: *I don't know. I watch TV because like if there's nothing else to do, I'll watch TV. Otherwise, I'll like even play video games or go out and play basketball or something.*

Or

> Frank: *I enjoy computers. I enjoy computers, like most people watch TV, I'll be on the computer. I like making programs or making web pages, stuff like that.*

Past experiences of other mediums become part of the process of choice through which meanings of pleasure become identified with leisure activities. For one student, whose access to television was limited as a child, reading was perceived as a much more satisfactory medium than television.

> Etta: *My mum doesn't believe in watching TV. So we never had a TV, so both my sister and I, we kind of just always, always used to read. Like it was actually a habit. But now I have like my own TV, since like I work or whatever. So now I read less. But I still like to read. I actually like reading better than watching TV. Because TV, you kind of get tired and you are just sitting there because there is nothing else to do. But if you get caught in a good book . . . .*

The students narratives show that they watched a variety of television programs ranging from African-American sit-coms, such as *Fresh Prince, Cosby Days,* and Keenen Ivory Wayan's *Living Colour.* A few students noted that the number of programs centring on the lived experiences of African Americans had decreased recently in comparison to a few years ago[4]. There may be some empirical verification to this observation since recently, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) has argued that the networks are not using black actors in prominent sitcoms (Haynes, 1999). Since many sitcoms are repeated year after year, some students still watch older programmes such as *Fresh Prince of Bel Air.* In discussing the impact of shows such as *Fresh Prince of Bel Air* or *The Jeffersons,* Gray (1995) argues that they should be regarded as pluralist rather than assimilationist. His argument rests on the basis that "what makes these shows pluralist and therefore different from the assimilationist shows is their explicit recognition of race (blackness) as the basis of cultural difference (expressed as separation) as a feature of US society (p. 87).

The three programs watched by most students were *Jerry Springer*, *Rap City*, and *Seinfeld*. Interestingly, Seinfield was classed as a "show about nothing." This representation of the show as "about nothing" may well draw on the dominant media discourse and hype about the show. It is interesting because, as a show about nothing, it is not located consistently within a workplace, or family, or school–traditional sites for location of "sitcoms," as well as sites that define status of the individuals involved in the on-screen interaction. *Jerry Springer*, a "talk" show that consists of more fights and expletives than "talk," highlighted discourses on the constructed nature of realism in the program. Of the three programs, only *Rap City* has consistent representations of blackness, and therefore, for the purposes of this thesis, only narratives highlighting this program are presented.

RapCity, unlike many of the programs that the students watch, is a Canadian product of the growing sophistication of satellite and television cable communication technology. In response to this thrust of late capitalism and technological opening up of Canadian borders, media mogul Moses Znaimer[5] founded the *MuchMusic* television channel in 1984 to play nonstop music videos in a similar way to its US sister, *Music TeleVision* (MTV)[6]. This enthusiasm to communicate back and forth beyond state borders is reinforced by a general culture of globalization and corporate capitalism. The latter can be seen as an example of the ways in which corporate capital is able to stretch geographic boundaries of the nation state to align more profitably with corporate structures, and thus support the ideology of globalization. TV stations such as *MuchMusic* enable the rest of the world to be inculcated into a world of youth culture in general, and hip-hop in particular. The following narratives reveal the choices of programs made with regard to *MuchMusic*:

> Phyllis: *That's mainly what I watch. I watch Much Music a lot.*

For Melvin, *RapCity* was his main choice in viewing the *MuchMusic* channel:

> *Well, like if Rap City is on, I'll like [watch] the station Much Music, but like if RapCity is not on, no. 'Cuz they don't even like play rap on it. That's pretty much the only stuff I want to see unless they've got like a reggae video on or something.*

The two *MuchMusic* programs discussed were *RapCity* and *XtendDaMix*. *RapCity*, by far the most referenced of the two programs plays primarily rap videos, while *DaMix* concentrates on r&b and reggae. Although Master T., a young African of the diaspora, produces the two programmes in Canada, many of the music videos that are played originate in the United States. However, despite the strong flavour of US produced music, *RapCity* provided the most publicly-accessible venue for Canadian rappers. As Gerald outlines, in response to a question as to how he heard about Canadian rappers Rascalz and Chocolair:

> Gerald: *TV, watching* *RapCity.*

Thus, Canada and the rest of the rest of the digitally-accessible world was inculcated into the culture of hip-hop[7]. As an offshoot of rap music, music videos have become an important means of mediating images of youth culture. These images of dress style act as a form of layering that shapes representations of blackness in Canada. Rinaldo Walcott, (1996) identifies the importance of music videos for expanding the ability of music to project certain meanings and images:

> The addition of image to music greatly expands the range of possible messages that may be conveyed by a pop song. Standing as it does at the intersection between popular music, cinema and television, music video is a unique manifestation of popular culture that demands a corresponding flexibility of approach in its analysis. (p. 8)

Music videos, when read intertextually reinforce representations constructed via rap music, i.e., they reinforce a dominant image of black masculinity. In particular, music videos construct and reinforce the image of the "authentic" rapper as an African- American male rather than an African-Canadian, male or female. Such linking is undertaken by focussing on specific signifiers during the playing of music videos. The males in the video's foreground are often placed in relation to specific backgrounds, with friends: a positioning that identifies them as being in the hood. Tricia Rose (1994) has noted this placement in music videos and argues that:

> Nothing is more central to rap's music video narratives than situating the rapper in his or her milieu and among one's crew or posse. Unlike heavy metal videos, for example, which often use dramatic live concert footage, and the concert stage as the core location, rap music videos are set on buses, subways, in abandoned buildings, and almost always in black urban inner city locations . . . When I asked seasoned music video director Kevin Bray what comprised the three most important themes in rap video, his immediate response was, "Posse, posse and posse." (p. 10)

In the following narrative, Langston identifies the ways in which videos are constructed around an array of signifiers that reinforce rap's main thematic concerns of "locatedness" and identification with the hood:

> *Two thirds of the videos that rappers do show don't have anything to do with the song they actually are singing about. Like sometimes, like you might hear a song*

> *about--like sometimes they do go together. Like if it's not a story. If it's about a rapper saying something like "Oh yeah, I am rich," they are going to show big houses. If it's a rapper saying something about women, they are going to have a lot of ladies in there. But then again, there is a theme to the story. Like sometimes they just go stupid and just put any thing there. Sometimes the videos just an expression. It's more of a celebration most of the time. Like videos, two-thirds of the times, were just a celebration of, you know, "Well I made it this far all my friends, all my friends come into my video. Just show up." And they will be talking about something totally different.*

For Doreen, rap music videos, construction of gender, beauty, and desire are highlighted. Her narratives identify the ways in which constructions of beauty and desire are often contoured by the relationship between the production of a video text and its reception. For her, male reception of videos and construction of desire are mediated by:

> Doreen: *The videos are good. I just watch the videos for the dancing.*
> J: *What about the ways in which the women are portrayed?*
> Doreen: *[kiss teeth] LL Cool J. I don't like how he acts in like those videos. 'Cuz he always gets some girl in some little piece of clothes. That ain't covering anything, okay?. And you know what gets me mad? Girls in videos, right? Actually it doesn't matter. Okay, the girl, like a person who is famous, could be the ugliest person, and the girl is ugly and you see all these things. There might be a girl in our school who looks like her, right, and they look exactly alike. But because she [the girl on video] is famous, everybody thinks she is so sweet. And the girl in our school is called, "she is a dog, and she is ugly." I am like, why are you guys talking that way though. And they think that every black girl they see in the video is so pretty. Just because like she is in a video. She could be the fattest, like, ugliest girl, whatever, and they still think she is pretty just because she is on TV. I don't get that.*

In the above narrative, Doreen describes how music videos evoke meanings through interaction between video text and reader. Constructions of beauty draw on the glamour of the medium to contour women in certain sexualized ways, moving them from the category of ordinary to the extraordinary and exotic. Doreen's narrative also indicates an awareness of what Stuart Hall identifies as "preferred readings" in the construction of a video text. She was able to identify the construction of a male gaze in music videos and how specific signifiers connote specific meanings. Her narrative challenges the automatic accessing of a specific reading of the video text and, instead, indicates that she negotiates between preferred and oppositional meanings (Hall 1980). She indicates the gendered codes that are constructed within music videos:

> J: So you can tell when it's a video made for a guy?
> Doreen: *Yeah!! When you see pure girls standing up there, like jiggling up their booties in the screen. And you know when its for girls when you see some guy*

> *pouring water down himself [laugh]. That's the girl bit, "cool off." All these guys like singing mostly slow songs. Like guys singing, you know it's for girls. Like it's so obvious.*

At times, reading music videos as gender coded extends into everyday lived experiences as explanation of social relations. In the following narrative, Melvin accounts for an acquaintance's dress style as a reflection of representations garnered through music videos. In response to a question on why he sees another student as identifying with music videos, Melvin identifies how videos reinforce women as sexual objects and the social consequences of identification with such representations:

> *Oh, it all depends like what kind of videos like, um, she just dresses like, okay? 'Cuz there is East Coast and there is West Coast rap. And like pretty much there's more rap, but that's what separated them. And the east coast ones wear sort of baggy jeans and stuff, with little like shirts that come up to there [midriff] and then big jackets sometimes, otherwise they are like holding up with something. And like that's what she is, like she is dressed like a mixture of both. Because the West Coast girl, they pretty much come out like half-naked. With everything like hanging out. They come with like G strings and stuff like. That's what she'll be sporting. Like warm weather, too. Shorts that like [kisses teeth] all that nonsense and big shoes.*

As well, music videos were recorded, thus delaying further the space-distanciation between production and reception. The differing ways in which the video can be viewed evoking emotions repeatedly are evident within Merle's narrative.

> *Oh I watch them all the time [laugh]. I have to go buy it. Thank you for reminding me. I have to go buy myself a new tape. I record them because we have a stereo system in our family room. So when it comes on, we put on the super bass. You turn it up on the speakers, because it's on both sides and it sounds so good. And then you just go back. If you don't have that song on tape, you can listen to it on the TV. And I don't know, I like it. You just see them and then they will be wearing new styles or something. Girls will get their hair . . . it will be like "Oh I like her hairstyle, do my hair like that. Things like that. It's just fun.*

The narratives identify *RapCity* as an important source for images of blackness. News reports and reality TV programs, such as *Cops*, can also be identified as part of a regime of representations that contour understanding of black youth culture. Phyllis identifies such a link between *Cops*, a reality crime show, and overrepresentation of blacks as criminals. In a sarcastic tone, she identifies what she learned about blacks on TV:

> Phyllis: *Unless you are going to get into, like the "Cops" thing, whatever. Then they show like every black case there is going.*

However, for Omar, other "positive" representations of blackness exist on TV to contest those of *Cops*:

> *If you choose to watch all the bad stuff, you can do that. So you can learn just about any thing. Like there's shows like "Cops" [laugh]. Half the people they catch are blacks. So its like "Oh, okay. I guess all the black people are crooks." And then you can watch another show like, phew, "What's that?" There used to be a whole bunch of shows. Like the "Cosby Family," even. You'd be like "whoa, black people are nice," you know, well behaved, whatever. So you can learn anything.*

Even the more "factual" news programs emerge within the narratives as conveying racialized codes (Koza, 1994). Thus, presentation of the news is read intertextually in conjunction with and in relation to other existing discourses and texts that flow within society. Eulyn highlights how this process of intertextual coding works for her when watching/listening to the local news:

> Eulyn: *But I guess, um, they just show the negative stuff, really.*
> J: *You think so? //Uh huh// Give me an example.*
> Eulyn: *Like we [blacks] are murderers, and robbers, and all that kind of stuff.*
> J: *And this is on the news?*
> Eulyn: *'Cuz like if someone, like with that stuff that happened with Valley High. It was a black kid who stabbed the guy. It wasn't like, if it was a white person, I am sure they wouldn't have said any thing.*
> J: *Oh, did they say it was a black kid? //Yeah// How would the [news] have dealt with it then? What would they have said?*
> Eulyn: *They probably would have said, "Oh there was a stabbing at Valley High between, you know, kids or whatever.*

This narrative also illustrates the ways in which meaning accumulates across different texts "where one image refers to another, or has its meaning altered by being 'read' in the context of other images" (Hall, 1997, p. 232). Such an intertextual reading also draws on the unsaid, the absence/presence, to give meaning to a social situation. In continuing our interview, Eulyn expands on how she uses absence/presence of racialized signifiers to "understand" the context of a news item:

> Eulyn: *Well, first of all, when I hear something, I am always thinking, "Oh please don't let them be black." And then when I don't hear anything I am like, "Oh they are probably not, then."*
> J: *So what sort of things?*
> Eulyn: *There is a bank robbery, or someone held up at Mac's.*

Eulyn is identifying what John Fiske (1987) describes as the relationship between negativity, "otherness," and power. As Storey sees it:

> There is, of course, a connection between elitism and negativity; the positive or "normal" actions of elite people will often be reported whereas those without social power are considered newsworthy only when their actions are disruptive or deviant. In representing the dominant as performing positive actions and the subordinate as performing deviant or negative ones, the news is engaging in the same ideological practices as fictional television. (Fiske, pp. 285-6)

Chapter Summary

The chapter analysed the narratives intertextually, highlighting the ways in which the meanings of images are read in relation to each other. The narratives suggest that the youth culture that the students encounter represents blackness via regimes of representation. Reception and consumption of magazines, movies, and music videos draw heavily on US-based youth culture and other racialized and gendered discourses that exist within society. This access to predominantly US youth culture adds up to a hegemonic representation of blackness for these Canadian youths of African descent. In some ways, the students' narratives reveal a disjuncture in experiences that Anthony Giddens (1990) identifies as "locally situated expressions of distanciated relations" (p. 109). By this he means that the students encounter cultural formations that place them in connection with an African-American youth culture which is not directly aligned with Canadian experiences. Across the varying forms of youth culture discussed, hip-hop was perhaps the most significant cultural form and presents a variety of symbols through which meanings can be constructed. A racialized regime of representation was highlighted to reveal how representations of blackness in films, rap music, and music videos reinforce the lived experiences of African Americans as representative and universal of blackness within the diaspora.

In looking at the hood films in conjunction with hip-hop culture, the narratives construct a specific representation of black youth identity that highlights male heterosexual identity. As with all discourses active within society, this gendered and racialized discourse operates intertextually as students draw on other discourses within society to make certain meanings intelligible.

The next chapter will analyse the ways in which regimes of representation produce dress styles and the consequent use to which the students put such style.

Notes

---

[1] Refer to Thompson, 1990 chapter 4 "Cultural Transmission and Mass Communication" for a coherent discussion of the growth of the media industry as a "specific historical process that accompanied the rise of modern societies" (p. 163).

[2] Queen Latifah, one of the most influential women rappers in the US, noted for her womanist song "who are they calling bitch?" that urges young women to question labels such as "ho" and "bitch" as frequently used by male rappers.

[3] Following the collection of data a new drama series based on the experiences of young blacks in Toronto was aired on Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. These programs were not discussed.

[4] This lack of television programs with black lead characters would seem to be correct in that when I last interviewed students in 1994 references were made to many more new series for highlighting black characters.

[5] "Moses Znaimer is also co-founder, president and executive producer of Toronto's radical and popular and independent television station Citytv (1972) MusiquePlus (1986) and MusiMax (1997) Bravo Canada's NewStyleArtsChannel (1995(. In 1998 he founded MuchMore Music. (Http://www.chumcity/bios/moses.html 11/3/00).

[6] Znaimer's ompany Chum Ltd., is also responsible for continuing this process of bordercrossing with the expansion of his vidomusic channels into the Latin American market. (RDS data base Acc# 1830340).

[7] In 1988 MTV moved across the Atlantic to form MTV Europe. In 1991 MTV Asia was formed.

Chapter 8

Riding the "Puffy Train"

[We] . . . inhabit a photographic aural and televisual culture in which the proliferation of photographic and electronically produced images and sounds serves to actively produce knowledge and identities within particular sets of ideological and social practices. (Giroux, 1993, p. 19)

Introduction

Chapter seven presented the ways in which the students encountered youth culture and films as part of a racialised regime of representation. This chapter analyses the various ways that the students consume and produce youth cultural formations and meaning through dress style. The chapter outlines the ways in which youth culture is often embedded within relations of power. Student narratives illustrate various ways in which their reception of media gets translated into everyday, material existence. Further, the chapter illustrates the everyday uses to which the students put their knowledge of dress style and music in order to produce an understanding of urban space: by linking ideology and consumption; as well as problematising the tension between "space-distanciation" and representations of blackness. The narratives illustrate how use is made of youth culture to reinforce a binarism that evokes a sense of "them" and "us," self and "other." Finally, the chapter outlines the way in which ideology, i.e., discourse in the name of power, operates to shape the relations of consumption and commodification. Such a focus reveals the nuanced ways in which the mass media can act as a system of knowledge and power, reproducing and maintaining relations of domination along lines of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. It reveals "how the meaning mobilised by mass-mediated symbolic forms is understood and appraised by the individuals who, in the course of their everyday routines receive media messages and incorporate them into their lives" (Thompson, 1990, p. 24).

Often dress style becomes the point around which much of this meaning-making and symbolic construction of knowledge takes place. As Hall & Jefferson (1975) reveal:

> Despite their visibility, things simply appropriated and worn (or listened to) do not make a style. What makes a style is the activity of stylization–the active organisation of objects with activities and outlooks, which produce

> an organised group-identity in the form and shape of a coherent and distinctive way of "being-in-the-world." (p. 54)

It is evident in this thesis that language structures and creates the process of understanding and interpretation that the students share. Such a shared linguistic understanding allows the students to construct a common past and projected futures (Denzin, 1989, p. 72). A common sense use of phrases, such as "North/ South," "acting black," or "being a playa," indicate the appropriation and use of media language in the students' everyday lives. This chapter will examine magazines and their construction of style, and explore how they are put to use by the students to codify their everyday lives.

Magazines

Magazines are the third and final aspect of youth culture examined to ascertain the ways in which media act as a repertoire of imagery and visual effects through which "difference" and blackness are represented during the late twentieth/early twenty-first centuries. A wide spectrum of US-based magazines, ranging from the more general *Ebony* and *Jet*, through *Sports Illustrated*, to rap-specific *The Source* and *Vibe*[1], were read, although not always purchased by the students:

> Student 1: *Sports Illustrated and stuff. The Source. Mostly I look for the basketball articles.*
> Student 2: *Shoes.*
> Student 1: *Some times the clothes, and sometimes I will go for the car magazines. (Focus group, males)*

In particular, the narratives reveal that the latter two hip-hop culture magazines, *The Source* and *Vibe*, are widely read. One student indicated the nuanced differences between the two magazines:

> Doreen: *Actually, if it's about rappers, you have to go to The Source. If it's about r&b and all that stuff, then Vibe is like good. And they've got good clothes in the Source. But if you are looking for clothes, I suggest look in The Source because they have good clothes. All those rappers are advertising their clothes in there, advertising their shoes and all that stuff.*

These US-produced magazines are also drawn on to provide understanding and give meaning to rap in Canadian society. Both these monthly glossy magazines, in conjunction with music video representations, reinforce the construction of "authentic rap" for African Americans. These two magazines are equated by many students with possessing "the deep" knowledge about rap and r&b, and are seen as somehow more authentic than others, especially when defined in relation to Canadian rap magazines:

> Melvin: *The Source, Vibe–there's more, I just can't remember. The other ones–they might be like Canada based magazines of rap. But the deep ones that you would actually go and look into if you wanted information are like Source and like Vibe.*

Access to US-based magazines emerges as part of a double process in the consumption and the development of preferred readings. As with many issues of social relations in Canadian society, meaning is constructed in relation to the US. First, the consumption of rap information in *The Source*[2] and *Vibe* reinforces the US position as the source of "authentic" knowledge and, at the same time, de-legitimates Canadian sources. As a result, Canadian rap music is seen as imitative rather than innovative, mimetic rather than "authentic." The following narrative reveals a view of Canadian rap as "lacking" both numerically and qualitatively:

> *Doreen: No offence. Canadian music sucks, man. //It does?// Yeah. Oh come on, there is like–like nothing. There is only one player like that whole group gets like five groups, and they made like one whole video. You must have seen it on Much Music. It's like on all the time.*

As the narratives make clear, representations of rap are those based on experiences in the US. The magazines bought by African Canadians reinforce and promote specific types of knowledge as more authentic than others. Reading is part of a social process. For some of the students, talking about and exchanging magazines provides not only opportunity for social discourse but also acts as a mechanism for reinforcing the importance and symbolism of particular magazines as authentic representations. Through "school talk" and interaction at school, magazines become an important means of transmission for what Hall calls "regimes of representation."

> J: *So tell me a bit about The Source, Vibe, and Jet.*
> Denzil: *They are all basically the same in that they bring rap news. Mostly that's what I read it for. And you see new clothes and new hair and stuff.*

In reference to *The Source* magazines that her male peers read, Mirelle says:

> Mirelle: *Source 'cuz [its] mostly on the rap artists and stuff, so they [males] want to know what's going on. What's the latest music coming out.*

Mirelle's comment identifying *The Source* as a "male space" is echoed in Doreen's narratives. For Doreen, the magazine provides information for guys, while allowing her to objectify male bodies:

> Doreen: *I read Vibe. I like Vibe. Ebony is my favourite. That's my favourite magazine. I used to get Jet, but I don't think they sell it in Edmonton anymore.*
> J: *That's what someone else said to me.*
> Doreen: *I like The Source lots too. That's like a guy magazine. Like all those guys read that. I just get it for the pictures.*
> J: *Pictures of what?*
> Doreen: *Of those black guys in there. Like some of them are good.*
> J: *Are they? So what do you do with them?*
> Doreen: *My whole room is like, covered with them.*

Doreen is alluding to the polysemic nature of the texts and, in this case, the way in which meaning is never fixed but is open to interpretation. While she identifies *The Source* as a "male space," she is also able to claim it as a space for the female gaze. Although this gendered receptivity was not expressed within all the narratives, it highlights the important role that such magazines play in the representations of masculinity, as well as the contouring of gender identification. However, not all female students were able to publicly gaze on black male bodies. In the following narrative, one student indicates how her mother responded to her display of pictures of a male singer on her bedroom wall:

> *If I put one poster up that she doesn't like, she will rip it off. She has done it before . She will rip it off. It doesn't matter if it's a good one. Maybe I was in a phase where I thought [the singer] was just really nice to have on my wall. It was small little one though, right. I just put three here and three there. It was nice. Looked nice. There was no background or any thing, just [the singer]. I came back home, they were all off my wall. She took them off.*

Although both magazines are discussed in the students' narratives, *The Source* seems to be more popular, especially with the young men. Nelson George (1998) supports this postulation about the popularity of *The Source.* He argues that in 1997, the magazine's relevance and vitality were confirmed when it sold more copies via news stands than any other music periodical in America, averaging 317, 369 copies per issue, compared to Rolling Stone's 169,625. *The Source* continues on because it represents a keep-it-real alternative to the glossy, photo-driven coverage that has defined *Vibe*" (pp. 71-2).

In the narratives, *The Source* and *Vibe* were sites for the transmission of cultural meanings and understandings in relation to music and style associated with black youths. Interestingly, a number of the student narratives indicate that although they read the magazines, they did not purchase them. A variety of reasons were given for this anomaly. For one student, age was a factor in buying magazines, since one of the attractions of a "teen" magazine was that it enabled identification with an older group and signified a certain kind of self. Thus she identifies how the purchase of magazines changes with adolescence and perceptions of the self:

> Phyllis: *I don't read many magazines really. I used to read like a lot of, like, when you are a kid you go through like a teeny-bopper stage when you read like Dot magazine and da da da magazine, whatever magazine, kind of stupid. And then, I don't know. Like just the little stuff like that I used to read. But now I don't really read much. Once in a while I read like Seventeen, or I read YM. Sometimes I will pick up a bop magazine because I will see someone, like a singer I like, on there.*

Other students see magazines as too expensive. It is less expensive to browse through a friend's copy or thumb through a copy on the music stand. As Eulyn explains:

> *I don't know. I just think it's a waste of time because you are going to read it once and then that's it. //Oh right// So it's better just to read about it for free. Then you don't have to worry about it.*

Although many narratives suggest that they did not purchase magazines, they were nonetheless still influenced by the contents via social interaction and exchange with peers and siblings. Tricia Rose (1994) in support of the latter indicates that:

> *The Source's* "pass-along rate" is approximately 1 purchase for every 11-15 readers. According to Bernard, [an editor at *The Source*] this rate is at least three to four times higher than the average magazine industry pass-along rate. It is conceivable, then, that a similar pass-along rate exists among rap music CD and cassette consumption, especially among consumers with less disposable income. (p. 8)

For Wayne, it was neither age nor cost that was prohibitive but, rather, his religious belief that made reading or purchasing magazines with "worldly truths" highly problematic and thus having nothing to interest him. In response to my question concerning his magazine reading, he gave the following response:

> Wayne: *I don't read magazines [annoyed].*
> J: *Do you look through them?*
> Wayne: *Not unless I have an assignment.*
> J: *How is that then?*
> Wayne: *There's nothing that interests me.*

At other times, students' receptions of magazine articles about rappers were coded as examples of "reality" in the US: a reality that although brutalised, can be translated as positive. Such articles reinforce the American dream of "making it."

> Doreen: *Well, it goes like this . . . . You know what I like to see though, like about that magazine. How they are talking about how they were all like poor and everything and it's like their dream comes through, because they got all rich after, and like everybody loves them up. And they are like–make pure money and everything. I like to see that type of stuff because it's "real." Like I stop and think, "I really feel bad for people in the ghetto, like I really do."*

Consuming Style

Magazine consumption is an important part of youth culture and is instrumental in developing a sense of style and offering a point of identification. The latter can be illustrated by Gerald's comments with regard to an advertisement in *The Source*:

> Gerald: *Yeah, like we don't get that kind of stuff like in Canada. [pointing to picture of shoes in The Source] Like Lugz, like if we could, we would wear those too.*
> J: *Lugz did you say? What are those?*
> Gerald: *You can't buy it. It's a type of name brand for a type of shoes. You can't buy that stuff here.*

Gerald's narrative leads us into the area of dress style and the ways that youth style is developed among the students. Without doubt, hip-hop style is and has been the most influential among students and youths across North America and beyond. The importance of dress style can be seen in Paul Willis' (1993) comments that "clothes, like musical tastes, are an indication of the cultural" identities and leisure orientations of different groups of young people." In terms of this study, his comments would hold true, as the narratives position students within and in relation to discourses of style.

As the narratives reveal, hip-hop style and culture is not just a matter of purchasing or accessing magazines, listening to the music, or watching films and music videos. It is not just about consumption, it is also about production. It is about presenting a self. It is this presentation of the body that becomes important in signifying specific meanings and identities through dress style. Stephens (1996) argues that "within hip-hop subculture . . . the styles and material culture of the subculture have been central to identity formation. That goes for the wearing of fake gold chains called 'dope-ropes,' oversized casual pants, the X Cap, to the high-top-fade hair cut, and other hip-hop manifestations" (p. 197). Throughout the narratives, consumption of hip-hop culture was not automatic nor uniform, but was intersected by time availability, gender, and socio-economic status. For some students, adherence to the latest dress style and the latest forms of rap music was problematic, thus consumption was often partial:

> Gerald: *Like I am not really into hip-hop that much. Just like, not as much as most of my friends are. Like I don't know how much time they spend listening to it or watching it or reading, but I don't really have that much time to spend on it. So I don't know. Like I love the music, but I,m just not like into it as much as they are.*

Or

> Etta: *Don't get me [wrong], I like hip-hop and stuff like that, but people–that's their life. People that actually do the killing and stuff like that is because they feel maybe that's almost their identity. People that couldn't get past the struggles of being black, I guess. Things like that bother them.*

What these two latter narratives illustrate is that hip-hop is a cultural formation that requires knowledge and cultural understanding of the everyday experiences of those who are directly involved in the production.

As the narratives illustrate, common-sense understandings of the students construct hip-hop as a black cultural formation, where the signifiers "black style" and "hip-hop" are interchangeable. Although the students dressed in a variety of ways not necessarily identified with being black, it is clear from the narratives that the representations students draw on for inspiration have much in common with hip-hop culture, often with a personal inflection. Some of the students referred to dressing in "baggy style" or having a "sporty style" as black, while others were cautious in generalising about a connection. Throughout the narratives, the dress style that the students were cognisant of, and identified with, was one mediated by music magazines and music videos. Gerald struggles to articulate this point of connection between style and black identity:

> J: *So how would someone who is black dress?*
> Gerald: *Well there are exceptions. Black people don't dress, but like, I don't know, like the name brands that you wear, the shoes you'd wear, the way you'd wear it. It's like the styles that you'd have.*

Or:

> Phyllis: *Kind a like a sporty style, I guess. The track pants all the time and the Nike shirts and everything.*

Or Melvin, in reflecting back on his dress style:

> Melvin: *Like the baggy clothes. I still wear baggy clothes. Just for like comfort. Like baggy clothes, the like, jeans, like how would you say? Ok, when Exhaust first came in. Like Exhaust jeans. I used to like sport those all the time. And like, the gold. I used to wear, I used to have gold.*

And he continues:

> *Actually, you always have to have like nice shoes. Cos everybody, man, there's all these people I don't even know where they get their money from, but they've got like a million of pairs of like Nike this and all. And yeah like I used to, like, dress in all those shoes too. And like get all the nice new brands.*

Gerald's, Phyllis' and Melvin's narratives are consistent in identifying black dress style with consumption of designer labels such as Nike.

The narratives indicate that dress style is often developed through reception of media images of rappers and r&b singers:

> Gerald: *Oh I kinda see that the way we dress, we try to imitate people like Snoop and like other rappers.*
> J: *Such as?*
> Gerald: *Method Man.*
> J: *Who? What does he look like? What does he dress like?*
> Gerald: *I don't know if he changes his styles. Like, basically [he was] the first one that I seen to wear those like, you know, those fishermen hats with the rim around them? It's like a cap and it has like a rim going all the way round.*

Or as Melvin's narratives highlight, there is a close, if not direct relationship between rap music and hip-hop dress styles:

> J: *Where did you see it?*
> Student: *Oh, they pretty much all have to come down to music. To rap, so you would see this on TV. Anything--dress, everything that comes down pretty much comes from rap. Any one who says it doesn't–it comes straight down man.*

As one student's narrative reveals, at times this link between a rap musician and a personal dress style involves not just a process of reception but also a process of production–the taking on of a style and making it one's own. The following narrative illustrates how a student identifies with the hairstyles of Buster Rhymes, and Snoop Dogg. But it is an identification that is partial, as he changes aspects of the style to make it different:

> *Dogg came in with his cornrows like, then I got that. And I kinda stuck with that for a while. And then when you see Buster Rhymes going off with like his crazy hair going all over the place. Even though he's got dreads or whatever. I just like, do my hair all crazy.*

One of the female students talks about deriving a basic style from a singer and individualising it:

> *If something looks good, I'll wear it. And put a hat to it or for my nail polish the same colour, make-up the same kind of, different things like that. I'll like add my little touch on it to make it me.*

Although identification is made with rappers, this identification is not total and complete.

Style as a Relation of Power

Youth style is an indication of status and power. Dress style is an important resource that is used in combination with other attributes to define and construct specific identities and ways of presenting the self. It is a way of giving social meaning to the body. Intertwined with this understanding of dress style as giving meaning to the body are issues of geographic location and economic dominance: Edmonton in relation to Toronto, and Toronto in relation to the US. Edmonton was often seen as disadvantaged in terms of receiving and producing the latest fashion trends. One student who had lived in the US indicates this point:

> J: *You have the latest clothes? So how do you know it's the latest?*
> Delroy: *Because you know what everybody else wears, "Okay, I haven't seen that yet." Like this FUBU shirt. //Yeah// My brother bought me this for Christmas. Nobody else had really seen one of those before, but they are starting to come here now.*
> J: *Oh I see, right. So you think the US is definitely ahead.*
> Delroy: *Yeah, we got it. We get everything ahead.*

The narratives indicate that the degree of prestige of a given dress style is related to its location within or near to the US. Students allude to the ways in which dress styles are diffused into different geographic areas in Canada. Style in Toronto was seen as a reworking of the styles in the US and were rated more highly than dress style in "dry" Edmonton. The following narrative highlights such a hierarchy:

> Doreen: *They dress good. They kinda dress like them [singers in magazines] sometimes too. But the States has way better clothes and so does Toronto. Toronto has wicked clothes. Here. I can put it this way. I think Edmonton–it kinda sucks in a way. Because everybody's style like was in Toronto last year, is like [only] now coming down here.*

In some ways, innovativeness in dress style in Edmonton was contoured by an existing relation of dominance between Canada and the US, especially as represented in and through the consistent production and location of media culture in the US. The following narrative substantiates Doreen's latter point with regard to the importance of of the US and the influence of New York, in particular, on the ways in which youth fashion becomes coded as stylish or not. In response to a query as to peer response to a different dress style that, he adopted Gerald suggested:

> *People just like looked at me. Like my friends say things, that's wicked and stuff, but people never really come up to me and say any thing. Because they didn't know, like for all they know, it could be like something new from like New York. So they wouldn't have just come up to me and started "dissing" it like, "Ah that's dry," and the next thing you know they turn on TV and like Method Man is wearing it or something. So they don't say anything.*

As well, US style shapes consumption patterns and availability of certain consumer items in Edmonton. Frank describes this tension between demand and consumption:

> Frank: *Well recently, everybody was asking at Champs for FUBU, 'cuz it's always in like The Source, you know what The Source is? So it's always, all the latest clothes are advertised in The Source usually. So then people would see it and then they would ask for it here. And Champs started getting it 'cuz all the Champs in like Houston have them already.*
> J: *What's Champs?*
> Frank: *That's like a sports store, like shoes and stuff.*

Style was also read intersubjectively in relation to peers. One could be considered outdated by the extent to which others had access to a similar dress style. Being stylish is a complex manoeuvre requiring knowledge of both the local and the global, or more specifically, the US fashion market. Again, Doreen's narrative indicates that time and timing were important in terms of maintaining a sense of being fashionable. So if one had an outfit that reflected a new style, then it was best to reinforce that sense of the "exclusiveness" and its consequent scarcity value by wearing that outfit to indicate a sense of the difference and the unobtainable. The following narrative shows how to shop and maintain a sense of the unique that evokes a sense of desire in the "other."

> Doreen: *Know what you have to do? You have to go in like totally different stores and buy one shirt there and pants there, then you bring it all together, and you match it up. Because if you go and you buy a whole outfit, like you know, Stitches in West Edmonton Mall. If you go in there every guy, everybody in this whole entire school, like goes and shops at Stitches, so you have your South Pole, you have your Mecca, and all that stuff. Everybody has it, and you can't buy like an outfit in there without seeing like six or seven girls. You see how big this school is? Like fifty girls might have that outfit. And when you go out to the clubs or what ever, when we have like Teen Nights or something, man you see like more than ten, twenty girls wearing your clothes. Oh you can't go to those places. Like*

> *you should go and buy something at one store, and then you walk to the other one so nobody can have what you have.*

Thus, being fashionable was dependent upon maintaining a distinctive sense of self, while not being totally outside the "norms" of dress style. However, to be unique was not necessarily stylish, as Gerald's narrative suggests:

> *If I like it, if I like the way they are dressing, I'll dress like them. If I don't, then I won't. Plus you can see things like when you are shopping and stuff. If you see something like no one else has it. You don't want to get it. I am not saying like I see what everyone dresses like, like I want to be like everyone. But just like sort of like it's like guidelines kind of. Like I wouldn't like, everyone how they wear jeans, I wouldn't go and wear like spandex pants and try to start my new style or something. Like I'll still wear the jeans, but try to get something that no one else has.*

Or as Langston, who perceives himself as stylish, indicates, fear of straying beyond the "norm" acts as a form of social control on others:

> *Like it's the kind of thing. You see people wear it. Like you saw people wear it on TV. But it's like people don't have the . . . . This is what I think. Like people are scared to come up and do it themselves. And when someone does it, it's like okay, it's accepted. So you go ahead and do it.*

So adoption of style also represents a relations of power between different geopolitical areas as well as between peers.

As the commodification of hip-hop has increased during the 1980s and '90s, so has the economic cost of maintaining a certain style. The narratives outline how keeping "in style" was an expensive business for the students. Many of the clothes associated with more recent hip-hop style are part of a growth in consumerism within youth culture. This growth[3] can be linked to white designers' development of hip-hop related style. R. Jemal Stephens (1996) argues that after initially ignoring hip-hop:

> . . . established white designers expressed an interest in hip-hop clothing. These designers include Tommy Hilfiger, Polo, Guess, Girbaud, Nautica, Versace, and Marc Buchanan. Many now use rappers in their advertisements for leather jackets and jeans. In the shoe wear market, white designers who initially rejected opportunities to market and promote their products in *The Source* have jumped on the bandwagon as well. (p. 200)

Phyllis outlines how a designer label increases the cost of being stylish:

> Phyllis: *Oh yeah. If I was to get this shirt without the Nike check or anything on it, I probably could have got it for $20, but this one is like I got it on sale for $45 and it's actual price was $100.*

This process of commodification is based on the cultural economy of taste, where the decision to purchase is based on cultural value. Storey regards the latter as indicative that: "consumption, in this sense is an active, creative and productive process, concerned with pleasure, identity and the production of meaning" (p. 198).

With the expense of maintaining a hip-hop-related dress style comes the necessity to increase economic resources. For some students, part-time jobs or parents were used to finance access to such patterns of consumption:

> Melvin: *I had, actually, no serious job. But like a paper job. Like delivering for the [Journal], and I used to make money off that. And then I did flyers, and my parents would buy*
> *me stuff for like special [occasions] like my birthday or Christmas or something.*

Or Langston:

> *My mum, she gives me clothes. And she gives me money. I do get a job, well not really job, do this for somebody, do that for somebody.*

The lack of direct access to economic resources alluded to by Langston meant that for financially dependent students, parents become important in mediating the student's ability to consume dress styles related to hip-hop. For one student, parents buying his clothes meant that he was unable to fully subscribe to a hip-hop style:

> Omar: *It used to be, like I used to dress to be able to like say like I am part of the hip-hop crowd.*
> J: *So what did you dress like when you were part of the hip-hop group?*
> Omar: *I tried. I tried. It didn't work out. //Didn't it?// I can go on, like my mom buys my stuff. She even bought my stuff back then. She wasn't, she wasn't really into that [hip-hop style] right. So I tried but never like, I had like some tight jeans in grade 7 and I felt uncomfortable wearing that stuff. Not because of the way it looked, but it just felt uncomfortable. So, as I grew older, I got more money to buy for myself, and I started to like buy jeans like that were more comfortably fitting. But I was still thinking of what other people would think I look like.*

Omar's narrative makes clear that for some students, consumption of hip-hop style was often partial rather than full. His narrative also alludes to the importance of style in terms of generating a sense of acceptance by peers. As such, the narratives reinforce how style is as much for public consumption as for private pleasure.

Performing style

Public spaces such as school, clubs, and social events were the locus for articulating identity through dress style. As the students indicate, male dress style is constantly undergoing changes. The following student identifies the ways in which the school provides a site that reflects those changes:

> Omar: *It's kind of changing. It used to be big, big, big clothes and sneakers and the hat and what not. But now it's kinda changing into like the, what-you-call-it, the preppy styles. Or whatever. I wouldn't say its changed to that. But like there are some people who are like experimenting or whatever you want to call it. Like with the boots, the rolled- up jeans, and like the dress shirt and all like that.*
> J: *Rolled up jeans?*
> Omar: *Oh, like not rolled up. Like you know, like, instead of where'd I see it?*
> J: *Turned up at the bottom, and the dress shirt.*
> Omar: *There are some people who will come to school. I know black people who will come to school dressed like that. It's just, it's just anything that's kind of different.*

Or, as Phyllis identified, socio-economic status was now much more evident in youth style:

> *Like for some of the guys here. Before it was like the lower and baggier you could wear your pants, the "cooler" you were. Like the more boxers you were showing, it was the better. Now, it's the nicer clothes you wear, the better you are. Like if you are wearing a Polo or the Gucci or the Tommy Hilfiger, then you are alright. Like baggier clothes, like people are coming out of that now.*

Interestingly, the explanation for this change in dress style was attributed to changes in youth culture in general, and rapper Puff Daddy's influence in particular, as style among the males moved towards a more "smooth" look:

> Melvin: *Actually, that's true. If you walk down the hallway right now, you could see like [Will] standing on one side of the hall. And he'd be like all like his nice preppy type shirt and like his jacket and his glasses.*

One student who saw Puff Daddy as representing "smooth" dress style contrasted his own dress style as "dressing rough." In his narratives he identifies how the term operates to describe dress style:

> Langston: *"Rough." It's just an expression. Rough, I look good, I look rough. I could be dressed in a suit and I'll think I look rough. Just as long as you look good.*

> *But there is also the other part of saying you look rough. You know when you classify yourself in contrary to say, the way a prep dresses. You say I look rough, he is a prep. Just a difference because you are dressed in different clothes. Like they wear nice button -up shirts, and I am wearing a T-shirt. Or I am wearing a big sweater with a zip down, or he is wearing a hat, I am wearing a bandanna or I am wearing a stocking. He is wearing boots and I am wearing runners. He is wearing loose fitting jeans. I am wearing baggy jeans.*

At times, this presentation of self through style at school becomes intertwined with issues of motivation, as well as connotation of a type of academic self. In particular, a certain style of dress identifies an individual as "cool" or not:

> *Like, obviously people who aren't cool don't care, or else they would try and be cool and they'd be "cool." And everyone would just be cool, I guess. But sometimes I can see like people who just totally don't care if they are cool or not. They just care about like going to school. Doing their best. Going home, doing their homework, studying, don't care what they look like. They don't care what they do after school. Just care about that [schoolwork]. So like I can see how they think. But I don't think I can ever think like that. Sometimes I wish I did, but like I couldn't just change and start thinking like that. Sometimes I wished that was the only way like I was ever brought up–to think like that. But it's not so.*

The cool identity referred to is contrasted to and often used to differentiate oneself from geeks or nerds who were constructed as "just caring about school" rather than what they look like. For Melvin, this process of differentiation began early in his school life:

> Melvin: *Junior high, when I was in grade 7, I was, I guess you could say I was a little geek. I never thought I was. But I was, you know. I guess it's because I used to like dress differently to everyone else.*

Gender was an intervening factor in presentation of dress style. Within the narratives of a few of the female students, there is an indication that style was used to present differing senses of self. This differing presentation of selves indicates that style was used inconsistently as a means to evoke differing meanings in differing contexts. At times, one dressed in a totally different way.

> Phyllis: *Describe my dress style? That's a hard one. I think it just depends on my day. Like sometimes I can be kind of dressy, but yet other days I can be like just grunge or else I can be right in the middle.*

Or as Joy identified, with regard to dressing like women rappers on videos, dressing allows the representation of differing-gendered selves, a mix and match, between "feminine" and "bad girl":

> Joy: *That's a hard question. It's like some of them dress the same way. Actually, I notice [with] what all of my little crew, we like, one day we will go like kind of like "bad girl style," and then another day we will go kind of like "nice and feminine," whatever. [laugh] Like kind of dressed up, we always "mix an match" like that. I think it's kind of similar [to singers] but just different clothes. But we are like what they [women rappers] are wearing too.*

The ability to produce a sense of self through dress style is, however, conditioned by prevailing normative standards. As Denzil indicates, if women wear what they want and show off their bodies then:

> *That's fine. But then they shouldn't complain about guys staring at them or hitting on them or anything like that because basically they are asking for it. If they dress like that to get attention, then they are going to get attention.*

Another student's narrative indicates an awareness of such normative discourses that shape style. She identifies how desire to imitate the dress of the women represented on music videos is limited by gender expectations rather than being "open." A young woman indicates how she is subjected to expectations of gender and femininity:

> Doreen: *On TV you see the girls in those videos have like shorts and all that stuff. You know the Spice Girls? //Yeah// You know the black spice girl, you know how she wears those [laugh] long, long, dresses, and they have like the biggest slit coming up. Boots with hot pants and everything? //Oh yeah// I remember I used to be like, "Oh that's nice, I want them." But I am like, "Oh no you don't." But I am just saying I want them, but I don't think he'd like [mind me wearing] them. But I know when I got it I am that type of person if I get something tight. And I go to a party, I'm like, "I shouldn't have worn this" and Paul's like "Why not?" I go, "You should know. I feel so weird about my body."*

Doreen's narrative reveals the tension between collective norms and individual desire: norms that are reinforced by the expectation of the male gaze and meanings that are produced therein. It is a disciplining of the self, what Foucault (1988) would identify as "technologies of the self," a process that:

> . . . permits individuals to effect by their own means to, with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immorality. (p. 18)

In some narratives, dress style within the school was also identified with particular racialised groups. The narratives indicate that students from specific ethnic/racialised groups could be identified through certain ways of dressing:

> Phyllis: *If you are going by like races, I guess you could say a white kid usually, the average white kid that you see around, wears like the perfect fit jeans. I don't know, they just dress different from us. Like they don't wear the big baggy pants as the black kids do. Then you have the Orientals, who wear their hair short and they have two bangs coming down off the side of their face, and they all dye their hair like different colours all the time.*

For one student, not only is there a racialised link between clothing and identity, but the very ways of presenting the body through style heighten a form of black masculinity that other males cannot achieve. In response to a question on the existence of black style, she affirms the links between black style and designer label, as well as the ways in which clothing can construct and reinforce desire:

> Doreen: *Okay. Well. As for the guys, it's like the nice, like Fila or Nike runners. Or like they've got the boots, right? But for some reason Oriental guys dress one certain way, right? But when the black guys wear that style, it makes it look totally better. Anything a black guy wears, they make it look better, for some reason. I don't know what it is. And I think black guys look so good in white jeans. I don't know. They just look good. Like everything they wear. Like, they've got like their baggy jeans, they have cord, they've got their Nike, they got their Fila, Adidas. No, black guys don't wear Adidas, come to think of it. Not many of them do. Adidas is like kinda for natives.*

This construction and contouring of desire was not confined to females, but as the narrative of one young man indicates, dress style was an integral part of attracting the female gaze:

> Melvin: *I used to dress up in all the latest fads. I'd like be one of Tommys, [Hilfiger] all this stuff. But now I just like, I just throw on whatever. I don't even care. I don't even have any one to impress any more.*
> J: *So who were you impressing before then?*
> Melvin: *Well, it was pretty much like pursuing girls.*
> J: *Oh really? That's your main focus of dressing?*
> Melvin: *Oh yeah! [laugh]. You got to like look good or else the girls are just going to be like, oh they'll be like "Forget about him." So then I was like strutting my stuff. So I could like show the girls. But then, I don't know, pretty much now I feel that I am married, so I can just like "chill." Go round with my belly hanging out.*

This student's narratives construct style as something related to age and development. For him, getting older was marked by less emphasis on consumption of designer labels–a position which might well be influenced by his long-term relationship with his girlfriend.

For young blacks, males and females, the way hair is shaped and styled may be seen as both an individual expression of the self and as the embodiment of society's norms, conventions and expectations (Mercer, 1994, p. 100). The following student narrative iterates the ways in which adoption of a specific hairstyle can act as a signifier for other meanings not always intended. In this case, the signifier is translated and slides into a sign of "coolness" that draws upon codes and meanings evoked by the rap group Onyx:

> *'Cuz I had my whole head "Fro" And like everyone [at school] said that I looked like a geek, and I was like maybe I should just cut it down short. 'Cuz I didn't want to like look like anything. No, no, [that's wrong]. I started, like, I cut it short, right? And I keep like the top a little bit higher. And I wanted him to trim down like the sides and the back. And then by accident he shaved a bald spot, right? So I, then like I shaved off the sides and the back and then, I don't know. I was all of a sudden cool. Every one liked the style. "So cool." I was just walking around. I was like "Hey!" Then, like I shaved off my hair because, I don't know, that was the thing going through too. I think it was the time of Onyx. The rap group. And they were all bald, and they were like the big thing. And then, so I like shaved off my hair.*

For another student, it was his father who, using a gendered discourse, was most influential in determining his hairstyle–a style that cohered with presentation of a mainstream masculine self:

> J: *Your dad, then, thinks that you should look more conservative?*
> Denzil: *Yeah. He doesn't like, well he doesn't want me to worry a lot about my hair. He thinks that's kind of, like "girls worry about their hair," he says. "Only girls worry about their hair" [gruff deep voice] "Only girls do this and only girls do that." and so he said "Your hair grows this way easiest, so do it like this." And I have always had it like that. He made me do it like that, so I keep it like that.*

Another student felt hair was a way of creating different styles and presenting a different sense of self:

> Langston: *Yeah. I had braids, really long braids. Like when I pulled it down, it used to stretch that long. The thing is that like I grew my hair in the first place, to try something different with my hair. 'Cuz I had been cutting it all my life. It's like I grew it, had tiny braids all over my head. I used to have cornrows. I used to style the cornrows. Instead of going all the way back, I could have them go forward. Sometimes I had designs in my head from corn rows. After a while it just got boring, so I cut it off.*

These students' comments concur with Dick Hebdige's postulation that style is not just the expression of class location, it is a signifying system, communicating both cultural identity and cultural difference. Youth subcultures communicate their distance identity and their cultural difference from and in opposition to peer, parent and dominant cultures through a politics of style (Storey, 1996, p. 120). This politics of style is evident in the following narrative, as the student identifies the ways in which dress style is very much about representation. It is not an incoherent practice. It is something to be worked at. As well, he identifies how adherence to a specific style is no longer part of his repertoire:

> Melvin: *Previously? I was like, I have like actually a certain amount of clothes that I use for the weekend. And like I wouldn't wear them during the week. It would be something that I'd come out with at the week-end. And like sometimes, too, I'd like go out and buy something to like go to some party or something. Like if it was something big, I'd go out and get something. But like otherwise, pretty much, I have like a certain set of clothes that I wouldn't wear . . . like these would be my Friday pants. And I'd have a Friday shirt, unless I'd already done gone to like some party with the same people on Friday before, so that I've got to like change to my Saturday stuff.*

Although dress style is often presented as innocent of power, it is anything but. Certain rules about style were evident in the narratives. As indicated by Doreen above, style has various meanings attached by peer groups. The wearing of fashion had unwritten rules. Not anyone could wear anything, anywhere. The discussion of "style" in the sense of fashion and clothes is an important part of identification with, and presenting of one's self as, black. It is a way of marking and differentiating the body that is constructed through an interconnected series of hierarchical systems of race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has examined the ways in which hip-hop magazines are consumed by the students and the ways in which these consumption patterns help to develop a sense of style. Location is important to being stylish and in enabling access to certain styles. However, Edmonton's geographic location makes being stylish problematic. As one student indicated, Edmonton is "dry." Desire for US products is generated through the magazines the students read and music videos that are played on programs such as *Rap City*. Two main hip-hop magazines are read, *The Source* and *Vibe*. School is thus an important site for displaying one's dress style, and producing social meanings. In analysing the growth in production of mass designer fashions such as Tommy Hilfiger, it is evident that specific discourses and ideologies are operating in and on consumption patterns. Coded within the students' narratives on dress style is a linking with rap and periodisation. Puff Daddy is perceived as a "playa" because he raps about his money and women, rather than "keeping it real" and rapping about experiences in the "hood." His dress style is seen as a reflection of his nonidentification with the hood. This coding of dress style through music was translated to the school site and was further used to categorise peers. Also evident is the way that the descriptors "cool" and "nerds" are based partly on dress style that then gets coded with other practices to produce specific school identities.

The Source is identified as a male space, for young men to access the "real" knowledge on rap. This conception of real knowledge becomes anchored in US rappers and, consequently, operates as a code to delegitimate Canadian rappers' claim to authenticity.

In the next chapter, "Urban Legend," I illustrate the ways in which discourses and ideologies are given symbolic meaning during everyday experiences. By examining the way that discourses work, I should be able to gain a greater understanding of how the tension between structure and agency plays out in the students' lives.

Notes

---

[1] Harvard student Jon Schecter and David Mayes along with African American Ed Young started *The Source* in 1988. Following a failed bid to buy *The Source*, Qunicy Jones and Time Warner created *Vibe*.

[2] The *Source* represents East Coast: *RapPages* represents West Coast. (Stephens, 1996, p.268).

[3] If one examines copies of The Source and Vibe, one can easily attest to the dominance of white designers such as Nautica and Nike

Chapter 9

Urban Legend

Thanks to Adobe Photoshop and similar image-processing technologies, skin tones can be more easily manipulated than the indelibly marked musculatures that sell the sweated and branded products of Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Timberland, and Guess in the glossy pages of overground publications like Vibe and The Source that trade widely in aspects of black culture but are not primarily addressed to any black reading public. (Gilroy, 2000, p. 23)

Introduction

Having outlined the ways in which style is consumed and displayed by the students, this chapter moves on to analyse how the students make use of youth culture to organise their experiences. Three main topics emerge in the narratives: a racialized urban legend related to style: division of urban space based on style; and the ways in which black identity, through style, becomes identified as "acting." These topics illustrate the ways that identity is both symbolic and social and show how "the struggle to assert different identities has material causes and consequences" (Woodward, 1997, p. 10). The ways in which the students use binarism to generate meaning are evident throughout this section. O'Sullivan, Hartley et al., (1994) argue that such binaries are a "feature of culture, not nature; they are the product of a signifying system, and function to structure our perceptions of the natural and social world into order and meaning" (p. 30).

Urban Legend

One of the most important aspects of mediazation is the extension of information and knowledge to individuals and communities who because of geography, time or distance would not have had access previously. Mediated interaction means that first- hand experience is not as readily available to verify and validate experiences. The following section highlights how an "urban legend" affects students' ability to relate to certain black-identified subject positions. Leonard Stern, in an *Edmonton Journal* article, defines urban legends as "those astonishing, amusing, and sometimes scary stories that are told and retold around the world, the individual details of which may vary depending on local circumstances–the one constant element being that the stories are passed off as true" (Stern, March 12, 2000, E8). Such a "legend" was evident in the "Tommy Hilfiger is a Racist" stories that emerged from the narratives of the students. Such a story provides an interesting example of the ways in which discourses of the "real" and the "unreal" can collide. Although the story has been challenged and identified as inaccurate[4]; nonetheless, through racialized and economic discourses, the story produces certain social effects, via subjectivities.

The discourses at work reveal an ideological tension between a position that supports "blackness," and a positioning of one's self as "stylish." The purpose of the ensuing discussion is not to verify or dispute the students' narratives, but rather to look at the ways in which the students come to accept, or not, the "legend," and also to look at how they link it to other discourses in order to identify, and position themselves as specific subjects. In many ways, the discursive practices evoked by the legend illustrate the power of discourse and the ways in which discourses have material effects as, at times, the edges of "reality" and email generated "cyber-reality" become blurred. The narratives reveal what O'Sullivan et al., describe as "ideological struggle between discourses": between (legitimated, naturalised) black consciousness and (emergent, marginalised) laissez-faire attitude. Students' awareness of these emergent patriarchal discourses exists alongside traces of the previous discourses. So the narratives, in highlighting this urban legend, illustrate the ways in which discourses slip and slide.

This specific urban legend is interesting because it is based on comments that Hilfiger allegedly made on the *Oprah Winfrey Show*. According to the legend, Hilfiger's racist remark was that, "Blacks and Asians don't look good in my clothes." Despite the fact that it is possible to verify that the comment was never made, its continued currency is a testimony to the power of such legends to operate as "truth." The narratives reveal the ways in which this legend draws on discourses of dress style and consumerism as well as a politicised identification with being black.

Within Eulyn's narrative, below, the pleasure of dressing in Tommy Hilfiger is subsumed to perceptions of herself as black. Her actions illustrate what Smith (1988) identifies as the "simultaneous operation of agency and subjugation" (p. 132). She perceives herself as free from the ideology of consumerism while at the same time accepting the ideology of Black Consciousness:

> J: *Have you ever worn Tommy Hilfiger? //nuh huh// How come?*
> Eulyn: *Well, I always say, Tommy Hil, Tommy is for "wiggers." Because he is a racist. So [pause] I wouldn't wear his stuff.*
> J: *So what did you think when you heard that, and what happened after that?*
> Eulyn: *Well, I just thought, well, obviously, if he thinks that way, well then you know. I am not going to spend my money to support him.*
> J: *Did you used to buy his clothes before that?*
> Eulyn: *Some of them.*
> J: *So you made a conscious decision. Did you talk about it as a group, as friends?*

> Eulyn: *Yeah. Some of them are just ignorant. They just think, "Well, oh no, he didn't say that." Or "they took it out of context or something."*
> J: *So not everyone said "Oh I am not buying his clothes he is a racist."*
> Eulyn: *And they will say "Oh, it's so nice though."*

For Eulyn, as her comments make clear, her consciousness as black makes wearing this specific brand of designer clothes unacceptable. Her peers, in contrast, are portrayed as either ignorant of such "truth," or are compromised by their desire for style.

For Etta, the "truth" of the legend was legitimated by reference to her friends who claim to have seen the program in question:

> Etta: *No. First of all, basically, it's too expensive. Second of all, I've heard a lot of things about him. Very bad. //Have you?// Oh yeah. When he was on Oprah, he said that black people don't look good in his clothes. //Oh right// Did you see that show? //No // I never saw that show, but I actually heard like a lot of people like [Gloria] and that saw it, so I believe them. Things like that I don't understand. I think it's almost stupid of people to buy his clothes after that.*

The result for Etta is that available economic resources, reinforced by a politicised identification with blackness, dictate that Hilfiger's clothes are not for her.

Another student cites economic factors to account for his action, and reinforces them with racialised meanings:

> Denzil: *I don't wear Tommy Hilfiger stuff. It's too expensive, and he is kind of a racist too. So I heard. So, I can't afford it, so I am not going to wear it anyway.*

For another student, the availability of economic resources was not as important a constraint on his purchase of clothing as the ostensible racist comment in response to a question on buying Tommy Hilfiger style:

> Frank: *Not any more. I used to.*
> J: *Did you? And what made you stop?*
> *Frank: When I found out like what he said about black people, I switched over to Nautica.*
> J: *To where? //Nautica// So you switched over deliberately? // Yeah// You thought of that, and thought, "I am not wearing that?"*
> Frank: *Yeah, lots of people have switched over, actually.*

Frank, unlike both Etta and Denzil, was not limited by economic resources. His narrative indicates the ways in which socio-economic circumstances can contour racialised understandings. While Etta and Denzil drew primarily on an economic argument supported by racialised reasoning to support their rejection of Hilfiger designs, Frank was able to abandon Hilfiger and move onto a similar high status designer. He could be consciously black and stylish.

Phyllis' narrative indicates that the urban legend has produced material effects, making Hilfiger clothes a less-desirable consumer item than other designer labels:

> J: *That's very expensive. Is there much in terms of people stealing clothes?*
> Phyllis: *Used to be. With Tommy Hilfiger it was really bad. A lot of people were stealing Tommy Hilfiger. Because their shirts were going for like ; $200, $150. And even though it was like a T- shirt, it was like 150 bucks. And it was like, "I'll just steal it." And now nobody really cares because Tommy Hilfiger is losing so much business. Especially since that whole thing when he said, "Well, I don't like 'niggers' and 'chinks' and this and that." He lost so much business, and then he had to make a public apology, and all his prices went down because so many people stopped buying.*

The following narratives reveal how, when discourses collide, the positioning in terms of subjectivity is unpredictable. Unlike other narratives above, this student's orientations to the discourse move between positions identified as individual and collective. In response to a direct question on the issue of Tommy Hilfiger, the following narrative emerged:

> J: *Did you hear about the controversy with Tommy Hilfiger and comments he made about Chinese and blacks wearing his clothes?*
> Melvin: *Like how he is racist or whatever? //Yeah//. I heard that, but like I also saw that somewhere written that like he was happy that black people were wearing his clothes because, like I forget, some nonsense. I didn't pay much attention to it. But yeah, I heard about all that.*
> J: *Did it affect you and wearing his clothes or buying it? // No// Tell me why not?*
> Melvin: *There is always something going on. Like Tommy Hil is a racist. Snapple is owned by the KKK. Same with like, what kind of shoes? Doc Martens were like some like they were Nazi skinheads or something. People ran that and like, I forget, Nike has got it's story about how they paid people like two cents a year. Whatever. I don't even know. It doesn't affect me either which way. Like I'm sure, well, everybody has got to get paid somehow, whoever they are. I find those racist guys quite interesting anyways, like all the clan people. Like on Jerry [Springer], too, they are all interesting. And if they've got to make a dollar by doing something in order to make their dollar . . . . I don't support their view, but I can support their clothes. I am sure //Really?// they are saying "Hey, black people cannot buy this you know, yah de dah de." If black people are going to sport their gear and look good in it then hey! Then we might as well make you mad, instead of like steering away from it.*

For this student, consideration of style outweighed other ideological considerations. The ability to display a fashionable self evoked a sense of pleasure that could be turned back upon itself. It could be represented as a challenge and resistance to

Hilfiger's perceived racism. Using consumerism as a point of resistance, Tommy Hilfiger's views are negated by further consumption and increase in sales for Hilfiger. This student, using consumerism as resistance, was able to consume without subscribing to the ideological orientations attached to Hilfiger. This narrative, unlike others, highlights the contested nature of the urban legend. Interestingly, it is not the "truth" of the legend that he draws on to legitimate his position. Rather, he presents himself as resisting Hilfiger's racism.

At times, dress style is able to override racialized allegiances, as individual desire outweighs the collective black consciousness:

> Melvin: *Yeah. I'll sport his gear. I have no problem with that. So like if I met the man, Tommy Hilfiger. and he is like "Yeah, I don't want you wearing my clothes, because you are black," and he starts calling me names and all this, then I would knock him out. And that would be the end of the story. But otherwise, I know I'm never going to meet him. And like I do want to look nice every once and while. So I'll wear his clothes.*

Another student identified the ways in which the boycott on Tommy Hilfiger's clothes was short lived, and how arguments surrounding the boycott could reposition students as resisting racist meanings while consuming Hilfiger style:

> Phyllis: *Oh yeah, everybody talked about it. Everybody stopped wearing Tommy Hilfiger for awhile. And then everybody like thought, everybody thought about it and they're like, "Why would I stop wearing it. If I like it I am going to wear it anyway. So they bought it and they thought well, if he came to Edmonton–oh well, he is going to get pissed off. Too bad kind of thing. And then he ended up coming back to make a public apology. So everyone was kind a like well, okay, whatever.*
> *J: So did you believe his public apology?*
> *Phyllis: No. No. Even though he has got oriental and black models and all this stuff, whatever. You can't just change just because your line of clothing stops selling. Your mind just doesn't go, "Oh."*

For some, the urban legend was drawn on to reinforce existing tastes:

> Langston: *Some people don't care. Like I don't really care. It's just that I don't like Tommy Hilfiger. And it just give me more reason not to.*

Langston's narratives indicate that discourses often operate with and through other discourses that shape the relations of power. Similarly, Wayne, in using two discourses, draws on a normative discourse of religion in order to position himself as against consumerism–Hilfiger included. For Wayne, Hilfiger's clothes were perceived as symbolic of consumerism and "worldly goods" and, as such, incongruent with a sense of a religious self. As he sees the situation, Hilfiger is part of consumerism, which is part of a craving for worldly goods, in opposition to a spiritual craving:

> Wayne: *I don't have any Tommy Hilfiger. I am not the kind of person that goes for name brand. I just go for casual wear. No name brands. Still good clothes, you know. It's just the Nike check that makes the price so high. And like there's some Nike Shoes like for 200 what ever, whatever dollars. And you can take 200 whatever, whatever, dollars and buy at least four shoes. So tell me, which one is better?*

North/South–East/West: "We're Not Really Like the Rest"

Introduction

This section examines the ways in which the students use style and regime of representation to code urban space. This coding is based on socio-economic status. Student comments weave classificatory systems through which meaning becomes constructed. One such example concerned the issue of urban space and emerged in the use of the metaphor "North /South."

Geographic location[2] in Edmonton emerges in the narratives as an important signifier of difference, a difference that fragments conceptions of a unified black collectivity. I have drawn on the following theme to highlight the ways in which one cannot think in terms of a homogenous black group, and to identify the ways in which media culture plays a role in helping to classify fellow blacks as "different from." What the discourse reveals is the binaries Northside and Southside, in which each category is defined in relation to its difference from the "other." The comments illustrate the ways in which racialised subjugation cannot be viewed only in binary terms. Subjugation operates within racialized groups. This understanding also indicates that power is not just top down and one-dimensional but is more complex.

As well, style and fashion become linked with the ways in which we come to give meaning to specific situations. The narratives suggest that the students draw on media images and youth culture in order to make sense and mark off an "other" who, in many ways, looks like themselves. For Kathryn Woodward (1997):

> This marking of difference takes place both through the *symbolic* systems of representation and through forms of *social* exclusion. Identity then is not the opposite of but *depends on* difference. In social relations, this form of symbolic and social difference is established, at least in part through the operation of what are called classificatory systems. A classificatory system applies a principle of difference to a population in such a way as to be able to

> divide them and all their characteristics into at least two opposing groups; us/them self /other. Each culture has its own way of classifying the world–by means of classificatory system culture gives us the means by which to make sense of the world. (p. 28)

The following section reveals how some of the students create a binary between differing areas of the city, using media culture and dress style to symbolise difference. These narratives reveal what can be identified as a discursive formation, since in many ways they "refer to the same object, share the same style and . . . support a strategy . . . a common institutional, administrative or political drift" (cited in Hall, 1997, p. 45). Further, if we analyse these narratives as discourse, rather than to prove their "truth," we can instead examine when and how the discourses are mobilised and used during social interaction. As discourses, they illustrate how "every discourse is part of a discursive complex; it is locked in an intricate web of practices, bearing in mind that every practice is by definition both discursive and material" (Henriques, Hollow, et al., 1984, p.106).

The students' comments indicate that urban space is clearly demarcated through the descriptors "Northside" and "Southside." Joy's narrative links the Northside with the number of black people living there, as well as an exotification of the males, resulting in an ambivalence that generates an appeal of the "other."

> Joy: *On the Northside it seems like there are more black people, but I am not quite sure about that. But I think so. The people don't . . . it seems more like there are better-looking guys down there. It's like, "Yeah, let's go to the Northside!" [conspiritory] But then, also, like some of those black guys down there are slack too. They are like nasty. So, I don't know, but it's still like the North side! [whispered] He is a Northside guy. "Whoa." That means he is fine, or something. So I don't know. It's funny, it's so funny how these things–I don't even know how it originated from, but it just happened like that. And usually people from the Northside think they are all bad. They think they are all tough and whatever. So I don't know.*

For another student, who also identified the West End as a specific social space, the Northside is compared and classified most negatively:

> J: *Oh really! There's a distinction?*
> Eulyn: *The west end is like the soft side of the city. Then you have Southside, which is like in between. And then the North Side is just like "the hood."*

The students varied as to the extent to which they thought there was an ongoing dispute, based on symbolic differences, between the north and the south sides of the city. For the following student, the differences between north and south sides of the city were no longer issues of dispute:

> Mirelle: *That, too, is like before like long ago, that used to be a big thing–Northside, Southside. Now I think it's more calmed down. It's not big no more.*

Another student's narratives reveal a different picture:

> Doreen: *You know, the Northside and Southside have beefs too. Did those guys talk about it? Southside guys and Cherryfields*[3] *always have problems with the guys in Newtown. For what reason? It's just so dumb.*

Some students, even if they saw the dispute as in the past, could still identify specific social descriptions related to dress and style that characterised North/South. My response of incredulity did not deter Melvin from attempting to present a rationale and basis for the differentiation:

> J: *Come on Melvin! It's not in the water.*
> Melvin: *No, no. I am serious, actually. 'Cuz it was kind of weird. A lot of them were taller. And on the Northside you have like a whole bunch of like the short guys. It just happened like that. And there is a whole lot of explanation. Plus they dress differently. They talk differently to a certain extent. Like I don't even know how anybody talks any more.*
> J: *So tell me, how did they used to talk?*
> Melvin: *I don't know. They talk differently from the way we talked. I don't know 'cuz I can't remember how I used to talk. 'Cuz my lingo has like changed like so much. They used to use like different words and stuff. It's not so much like how they pronounce things or anything. It's just like there are different words to explain different stuff. And then we'd like use like different words to explain different stuff. It wasn't nothing like too big.*

The latter also reinforces the ways in which speech, argot, and slang are always important in identifying differences from and in reinforcing social boundaries. In this instance, a specific argot–"they speak like that" and "we speak like this"–is identified with a geographic area, reinforcing differences. Throughout the narratives there was a degree of coherence in terms of geographic alignment and the descriptors Northside and Southside. Specific schools were seen as part of communities included in these geographic areas:

> J: *You mentioned North side and South side. That's come up a lot. In terms of these interviews, what would you say was the Northside?*
> Melvin: *Pretty much Newtown. 'Cuz that's where like, I don't know, most of the black guys that whoever, like Newtown and Stadium, like they were like, 'cuz a lot of black people that like used to do whatever like came from around there.*

A student who identifies a dichotomous north and south distinction then has to specify and narrow the area in order to include family and friends and to avoid cognitive dissonance. Other factors, such as social compositions, are drawn on to make even finer distinctions within the geographic areas.

> Etta: *But mostly I am thinking Newtown area. 'Cuz like if you are talking about like Meadowdale, Towerbrooks, where my mum's friends live, and their kids, that's different. Because it's a different kind of atmosphere. It's kind of like like a Crystalclear different kind of neighbourhood. And it's not a black neighbourhood. It's just whatever. How would you put it? Even though it's the Northside, I don't really consider that. I'm just thinking Newtown.*

For one student who had lived on the Northside, the rivalry was still very much in existence:

> J: *So what about the rivalry between Northside and Southside?*
> *Student: Childish. Little kids. Like, no seriously like, when we got here, we didn't have a problem with Southside. One thing that I notice is that they do a lot of things different from the way we do. They act different and treat people different. Like they have some very stupid ways of acting. Like just like yesterday when we were talking about the code of dating blah, blah, blah. Like I come down here. I have a girl friend that lives on the south side. They get mad. Why would you get mad? They are not all there. That's not the way it is. It's not big rivalry or nothing. Like I don't have an outstanding problem with them. It's just that we are different. And they feel so [cocky] about themselves. You get into an argument with them and they say something stupid like, "Well you come from Northside and Northside is a slum."*

This latter student's narrative includes a conception of gender relations that aligns young women as objects, with males, in terms of urban space. To "date" across spatially-defined borders was to transgress a taboo built on the Northside/Southside distinction. This student's narrative illustrates how knowledge/power operates to enable or constrain behaviour. The noted bad behaviour of a young man was explained by one young woman as attributable to his place of residency. Living on the Northside was sufficient explanation for "bad" behaviour. Using descriptors based on popular hood movies allows access to a language through which communication of meaning can take place:

> Eulyn: *He lived on the north side too, so there you go.*
> J: *Oh? What does that mean?*
> Eulyn: *That's like, the hood–Edmonton's hood. They want to be like the States.*

This particular distinction of Northside/Southside draws on the language of hip-hop culture and rap music to explain and develop a classificatory system to account for the differences in dress and to make comparisons. Melvin extends this distinction, alluding to differences in hip-hop culture:

> Melvin: *And like most of the people from the south side had like bald heads. They all had hair. We had bald heads. They would like wear like bigger jackets with like toques and stuff, and we would like wear smaller jackets and like some form of a hat or like a visor. Then like they'd dress darker. We'd dress brighter, this type of thing. It's kind of like we were West [Coast] and they were like East Coast. It's like that.*

Here Melvin echoes the distinctions/rivalries drawn in the rap music world during the 1990s between the East Coast and West Coast.[5]

Other discursive practices are associated with this classificatory system of North/South. The narrative of one student indicates that student dress on the Northside has tended to maintain the same 'baggy" style, while the Southside boys are "riding the "sleeker" Puffy train":

> Melvin: *They kind of like stuck to their guns you know. They are still the same. And they like dress the same and do whatever the same. And then like most of the guys from The Southside are like riding the "Puffy Train." And they are the ones that are dressed up like that. Actually that's true. If you walk down the hallway right now, you could see like [Will] standing on one side of the hall. And he'd be like all like his nice preppy-type shirt and like his jacket and his glasses. And I don't know if you saw [Chuck]. Like say [Chuck] he'd be like wearing his baggy pants and his like jacket and his hair braided up.*

This reference to "Puffy" draws attention to the hip-hop artist Puff Daddy as a trendsetter who is leading a change in dress style, away from the previous "authentic" hip-hop towards a slicker, more commercial representation. There is a view among some, as indicted in chapter six, that Puff Daddy symbolises of the decline of "authentic" rap. Part of being able to distinguish one's self from "them" is also forming a sense of "us." The following example illustrates the way in which gendered discourses come to be used in order to make a distinction. Although the student is reluctant to name the Northside as deficient, nonetheless a sense of deficiency emerges to reinforce "difference" and to bolster the position of the Southside. Here Southside girls are seen as somehow "nicer," easier to get along with:

> Etta: *The Southside is pretty good because the girls here like I guess you can see we all kind of like a lot of the same views, but I am not sure you would find that everywhere else in every other school. I think there is a difference between–a lot of people say, well, Northside they say is a rougher side.*

For some students who mixed regularly with youths who lived in other areas of the city, the marking of such urban space via differences seemed irrelevant. Thus for Omar, experiences of different areas of the city, and his friendships that extend beyond his own bounded geographic area of the Southside prevent him from seeing the two sides of the city as binary opposites. For him, having friends on both sides of the city and to mix freely enabled him to problematize the North /South dichotomy:

> Omar: *'Cuz like people fight over the stupidest things. Like you're from the North side, I am from the Southside, you suck. And they will actually almost fight over that just because you live on one side of the city. Me, like I said, I know a lot of people. I know people from the Northside. I know people from the Southside. I know people from the WestEnd. There are some people in the south side that don't want to know people from the Northside just because they live. And like I have slept over at friend's houses on the Northside. I've slept over at friends' houses in the WestEnd and the Southside. So for me, when it gets to that type of thing, I am usually the person, I am either a) the person that'll say "Ya leave it alone" or b) I'll just watch it 'cuz I don't want to get into this. So its gotten to the point where I look at it sometimes and say, "This is stupid I am leaving."*

Why, when the black population is so small, there should be a need to make a distinction between differing geographic regions of the city and urban space is an interesting question. Although any answer can only be speculative and tentative, it may be that relations of domination are at work. While, on a denotative level, the discussion is about differing geographic areas of the city, at the connotative level, the narratives above draw on signs of socio-economic status. The use of specific signifiers that draw on media images is useful in that it produces and reproduces codes that represent socio-economic status. Exposure to differing forms of media culture enables the students to have access to a common language that exemplifies what Saussure terms "langue." Evidence that it is socio-economic status that is being displaced can be seen in the ways that the students draw on specific classed signifiers in their earlier narratives. This use of the term hood draws on the code constructed through the hood movies such as *Boyz N the Hood, Sugar Hill, Menace II Society.* The term acts as an anchor (Barthes, 1977) for the preferred meanings that are evoked through its use. Thus when hood is applied to a geographic area, the connotative second level of meanings emerges. This coding and anchoring of meaning enables the students to consequently develop a common-sense understanding of those designated as Northsiders. So Northsider males come to be viewed, self-evidentially, as "rough."

> Student: *People on the Southside think, just because they live on the Southside, they think they are rich or richer than people on the Northside. But they don't understand that people on the Northside, just because they live on the Northside doesn't mean they are not rich.*

"Acting Black"

For this section of the chapter, I would like to highlight two discourses, the first based on black consciousness movement; the second based on youth culture. Highlighting these discourses illustrates the ways in which the students orient themselves to and within the discourses, as well as the ways in which they use the discourses in their everyday lives.

As discussed in chapter four, since the 1920s the black consciousness movement has conceptualised black identity as based on technologies of the self that draw on knowledge of black lived experiences. Etta's narrative on blackness indicates a black identity aligned with this latter sense of consciousness. For her, being black involves a specific presentation of self:

> Etta: *You mean like how some people view some people, like even if they are black they'll say, "Oh he doesn't act black" or something like that? Okay, well, I think being black is like being proud of who you are. Proud of who your people are too. Proud of your culture. You are not ashamed of being black. Basically that's all, I think.*

Etta's narrative identifies two differing ways of being black. In one sense, blackness is based on physical appearance. In another sense, blackness is not just phenotype but also a state of consciousness. One is either proud or ashamed of being black. It would be possible for one to be defined as black by physical appearance, but then to be consequently identified, by behaviour, as not "acting black." Being black involves meeting certain behavioural expectations that position an individual as an "authentic black." This distinction between consciousness, or a lack thereof, is evident in the Black Nationalist discourse of the 1920's and 1960's. Mercer (1994) argues that these discourses of black nationalism, such as Marcus Garvey's "always acknowledge that racism works by encouraging the devaluation of blackness by black subjects and that a recentring sense of pride was a prerequisite for a politics of resistance and construction" (p. 103).

Style, as a representation of a black identity, depends on evoking disclosures of authenticity. These discourses of authenticity and consciousness were evident in students' discussions of black consciousness style and were evoked most powerfully over the narratives of hair. For three of the young women, the issue of performing an authentic black self arose from a discussion with a mutual acquaintance. For them, the ways in which they wear their hair does not in itself imply a particular identification with representation of being black":

> Eulyn: *I don't know. But he said one time that all black girls sell out to their own race, because we straighten our hair or we wear braids, and mean to say that we are not happy with the way we are, so we want to look white. 'Cuz that's attractive or something.*
> J: *So what do you think of that?*
> Eulyn: *I don't think that's true.*
> J: *Do you not? What would you see as a "sellout"?*
> Eulyn: *Um, sellout, um . . .*
> J: *Or is there no such thing for you?*
> Eulyn: *No, there is such a thing. Maybe someone like a black person who didn't really know who they are. So they go like say to the white race or something. Put us down and stuff like that. You know. Because they are not really [black].*

Such narratives reveal that historical traces remain of an earlier 1960's discourse that links presentation of hair with a consciousness of being black. In the 1960s, Black Nationalism drew on earlier formulations than Garvey's, and linked them to Franz Fanon's work and "his systematic framework for political analysis of racial hegemonies at the level of black subjectivity" (Mercer, 1994, p. 103). Within this discourse on black identity, care of hair became symbolic, socially and politically, and straightened hair was seen as a reflection of "psychic inferiorization."

Through more recent representations in the media, and youth culture in general, hair colour has become an open sign/signifier of blackness. The following student's narrative bears the traces of Black Nationalist discourse and suggests that blackness is opposite to "whiteness." As such, blonde hair is seen as outside the norm of what one might identify as black:

> Melvin: *Like you can straighten your hair if you want to like. But, like, keep it the colour it is.*
> J: *How do you come to that?*
> Melvin : *I don't know, it's just like something that's always in my head. Like if I see like, you know, Demolition Man, no, Media Man, how they have like all those kids. And everybody–they all have their bleached blonde hair. I just think it looks stupid. Like no matter, everyone can say "Oh, he looks good with blonde hair" or "She looks good with blonde hair," I'm like, "No." They all look good with black hair, or they all look good with their natural colour hair.*

In this instance, the narratives reveal an oppositional reading of the media text. This student closes down an attempt by certain rap artist to open up the signifier "black." This also indicates that there is no passive acceptance of what is represented within media culture. Discourse of authenticity and discourses of plurality collide within the discursive space of style and fashion:

"Acting black" was not always related to a sense of pride. For some it was a product of youth culture. One student's idea of "acting black" as a young person is identified not so much by what it is as what it is not:

> Denzil: *It's more just talking. I don't know it's just like. If you act black, most of the white people are going to think you are stupid. Especially adults. They think he is just, "He doesn't know what he is talking about." So you have to act somewhat mature in that sense. Yeah, mature, basically. That's what I think is not acting black. For a kid. For an adolescent, I don't know. I haven't experienced acting black as an adult yet, so I don't know [laugh].*

Denzil's narrative identifies "acting black" as being negatively assessed by white adults. Acting black is seen as a performance, as not acting "natural." The following narrative explicitly distinguishes acting "black" from acting "natural":

> J: *This young man then, is he one of these, who sees himself as a North American in the "hood?"*
> Eulyn: *Well, that's how he portrays himself. He mightn't want to come across like that but . . . .*
> J: *So tell me some of the ways that you could just look and say, "Yeah, He is trying to be in the hood."*
> Eulyn: *I don't know, it's just you know they don't act themselves. They are not just natural really. 'Cuz people in the States–it's natural for them to be like that because they grow up in that environment. But there's nothing that drastic here.*

Eulyn's understanding of black identity is one that is related to hood films. As well, she alludes to geographic location as important in terms of acting black. The specific representation of blackness that she identifies as based on experiences in the US. Such a sense of blackness is not necessarily dependent upon a consciousness of self or a sense of pride.

Since this sense of blackness is based on experiences in the US, it becomes evident that to live in Canada is problematic in terms of identification. There is a sense of geographically-bounded blackness. As several narratives in chapters three and four indicate, blacks in Canada were perceived as yearning to be black American. Joy also alludes to the way in which some youths in Canada align themselves with the experiences in American inner cities portrayed in many of the hood films:

> Joy: *You see some of the kids up here, they want to have a ghetto and stuff. But the people down there, if they had a chance to get out of there, they'd go. They don't want to be in that kind of environment.*

Another student comments on a male friend in Edmonton who had adopted this identification with the US inner city:

> Student: *Yeah. You are like, "come on, you know you are living in Edmonton. Why are you trying to go on [laugh]? You know Edmonton is dry. So leave it alone. Like, I hate to hear those guys. Like I remember this one guy, like my friend, [Vincent] he is like, "Oh yeah man, we shot this guy the other day." I am like, "What movie are you watching?" Like I told him. Like whatever. It seems like they read that magazine [The Source] and they come back and they're, "You know what happened to me, me, me." I am like, "Whatever, shut up."*
> J: *So how would someone who is imitating that, someone like this Vincent, how would they behave?*
> Student: *Like "Yeah man, and I capped him this way and he boxed me that way and we got in this big fight man, and after that we smoked a spliff." I am like, whatever. Like they are so dull.*

For this student there is a direct link between media representations and the identity adopted by her friend. Etta makes a similar observation:

> *Mind you, I know Canada is different than the States. But people here still do that. //Do they?// Yeah. Not like the way–they don't have the ghetto and everything like that. They imitate, and they try to imitate the States. It's not as much as the way they dress. But they try to act rough or whatever.*

In these discourses, acting black is linked to constructions of an authentic black youth identity that is "rooted" in the US. Several students discuss the way in which young black males in particular identify with representations of blackness on music videos, or films. Some see this direct identification with US images as problematic. For them, Canadian "location" diminishes the ability to be "authentic." The following student sees public exposure to US rap music videos resulting in a cross-border affiliation that is not necessarily beneficial to African Canadians. Here the suggestion is that for some youths, "thinking" and "being" become conflated as they watch and then act like the images that they view:

> Denzil: *The black community here. They act like we see on MTV. We see rap videos and we go, "Oh, we should act like that." I don't see why. Those guys act like that because they live in the States, and that's what it's like in the States. But here it's different.*

For Denzil, being black was a product of experiences within specific geographic location.

Video representations are held accountable for the ways in which certain black males behaved. This video-based representation of "acting black" is rooted in a US "location," and is not consistent with the Canadian reality.

Although the student narratives generally attributed "acting black" and the negative effects of watching music videos primarily to males, a similar analysis of consumption and production was used to explain the sexually explicit behaviour of one young woman:

> Melvin: *She just like started like getting like, same thing. She started listening to rap. Started dressing like she was one of those girls on the rap video, and now she is all over the city. She is like, man, she is crazy.*

The narratives also indicate that the ability to act black well enough to be accepted, as "one of us," requires certain signifiers, one of which is a dark skin. Wearing the right clothes, speaking with a specific inflection, or argot, and "walking the walk" are not enough to make a legitimate claim to being black. This raises the question of whether those classified as "white" can act black. The students often discussed non-black students who tried to "act black." In such cases, students spoke of their white friends who attempted to perform blackness as lacking a "true" self and attempting to align themselves with blacks in order to gain a sense of self. Black phenotype was an important part of being able to perform a black identity. For students who were not of African descent, it was problematic to take on a black identity. Denzil's comments illustrate this view that students who attempted to take on a black identity via dress, speech, and walk were trying to "fill a lack" in their lives:

> Denzil: *He has no personality whatsoever He is a manifestation of everyone else's ideas, everyone else's feelings, everyone else's emotions, everyone else's opinions. He has no personality. No opinion of his own.*
> J: *So he acts black to try to take one.*
> Denzil: *Yeah. He acts black 'cuz he thinks its "cool."*

Gerald, another student, identifies the problems of nonblacks taking on a black identity as represented by media culture:

> Gerald: *Like he would talk like he was black.*
> J: *Oh I see, and that's why you thought it wasn't. So what was it about it that made you think, "That's just fake," or "he is putting it on?"*
> Gerald: *That I don't like? //uh huh// 'Cuz he is [Malaysian].*
> J: *So you think that if you are not black, and you are trying to talk black then . . . ?*
> Gerald: *It's like obvious, like you are trying. I don't even think [Malaysians] liked him. [Malaysian] people like they'd look at him and they would laugh.*

Gerald's objection to such identification is based on an understanding of blackness that is essentialist, wherein biology determines behaviour and culture. The young Malaysian man was viewed as imitative, not original. Melvin's narrative, below, alludes to a friend of European descent as lacking originality in terms of presentation of self:

> *Pretty much. He is not original. It's like everybody who is there, he like takes an idea from them and like slaps it onto himself. Like there used to be a thing where, like with us, or whatever. You can't get the same clothes as with anyone else right? And like that was the thing that like started to hurt him like because like–if someone would get something he would get the same thing. You know. //Oh right// And then like, and then I forget, we joined up with somebody in the group. And then they are like, "Yeah, well, whatever, don't dress like this and this and that. So then he started like losing his originality and started flying off in a different direction. Well, he never had it, but like um he like tried to get it kind of and still like maintain his dressing like the rest of us. And like [so] he could be like accepted. But I don't know. He was kind of losing it.*

In some ways, blackness as a performance–a way of acting–was seen as part of the repertoire of styles available to students from the continent and the African Diaspora. The narratives highlight that such performances were often equated with black youths, primarily males, who seemed to adopt and make hyper visible the dress style, slang and walk associated with hip-hop and US youth cultures.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the students' narratives make clear that style is paramount in their presentation of self. The chapter highlights that dress style is not just about wearing clothes in the right combination, but it is also important to their identity as blacks. The students' narratives reveal that traces of the 1960s Black Nationalist ideology/discourse is still evident in terms of presentation of themselves. Contesting such discourses are more recent understandings of blackness that are based on media representations. Ideology–meaning in the name of power–also becomes intertwined with style, when the students use style to identify themselves as authentically black. Ideology and style are again evident in terms of the ways in which the narratives come to divide urban space into Northside and Southside in ways that are aligned with style and socio-economic status.

In the following chapter, I will reinterpret the students' *doxa,* highlighted in chapters four to nine. Further, I will revisit my cultural studies literature, the historical section on Alberta, and the students' perspectives on school climate, with regard to the key concepts identified in chapter one, and the socio-historical analysis of racialization in Canadian society.

Notes

[1] The internet site Urban legend and /folklore that is organized by David Emery, provides a thorough refutation of the rumor concerning Tommy Hilfiger (21/10/99).

[2] An issue of the Edmonton Journal categorizes the geographic areas mentioned by the students. In the article (October 24, 1999 E9) {Browsing through our multitude of malls} reporter Ric Dolphin alludes to socio-economic/classed dimension of the differing malls in relation to their geographic location. In many ways his descriptions of the malls' demography are similar to binarism used by the students in their categorization of Northside/Southside. Thus Dolphin suggests that "{South Mall} "positions itself as a slightly upper-middle class women's fashion destination"...while for "{North Mall} it is uncertain whether any of the rumored high end American contenders for a vacated store- Maceys, Bloomingdales' or Nordstrom—would feel at home in this very middle-class neck of the woods." {North }Mall sales are not particularly high in this blue collar north eastern mall"

[3] Cherryfields is an area in the Southside. Newtown is a designated as part of the Northside.

[4] Meadowdale and Castlebrook are "nice" area on the Northside Crystal clear is a higher socioeconomic area on the Southside.

[5] The east and west coast see themselves as producing different sounds in rap music and having different dress styles. During the late 1990s the animosity between the two coasts was signified by the rivalry between two rappers; Bigger Smalls, and TuPac Shakur. It is speculated that the death of these two men was as a result of this rivalry.

Chapter 10

Borrowed Blackness

Imaginary blackness is being projected outwards, facelessly, as the means to orchestrate a truly global market in leisure products and as the centrepiece of a new, corporately directed version of youth culture centred not on music as and its antediluvian rituals but upon visuality, icons, images. (Gilroy, 2000, p. 270)

Introduction

The earlier chapters of this thesis focus on what Thompson (1990) identifies as symbolic culture. By this he means, "the patterns of meanings embodied in symbolic forms, including actions, utterances and meaningful objects of various kinds, by virtue of which individuals communicate with one another and share their experiences, conceptions and beliefs" (p. 132). In this chapter, I draw on various themes such as "borrowed blackness," to interpret/reinterpret the students' narratives presented in chapters four to nine in relation to cultural formation and black identification. The chosen themes draw on a variety of identifications that the students make during their lives. Some of these themes relate to their sense of being black, while others relate to gender, sexuality and age. The source for this symbolic culture is youth culture. This is a generation of youth that cannot remember a time without televisual images and the consequences of living within an age of electronic media. Thus media culture offers not just sites of pleasure, but also a source for what Paul Willis (1990) identifies as symbolic creativity. His use of the term entails:

> [the] extraordinary symbolic creativity of the multitude of ways in which young people use, humanise, decorate and invest meanings within their common and immediate life spaces and social practices - personal styles and choice of clothes; selective and active use of music, TV, magazines; decoration of bedrooms; the rituals of romance and subcultural styles; the style, banter and drama of friendship groups. (p. 6)

It is within this social space of symbolic activity that this chapter of the thesis attempts to identify the ways in which students receive and appropriate media culture. As Hall observes, media are the key mechanisms for centralising cultural power, a social process that is achieved via cultural reception and the articulation of ideology into social formation. In terms of explaining or accounting for relations of domination my use of ideology is a cautious one in the light of recent poststructuralists retheorisation. I do not view ideology as tied directly to the economic mode of production, instead my use of ideology is in line with the interpretation of John

Thompson (1990) and Derek Layder (1994). For Layder it is a "notion of ideology in which systems of ideas are employed in ways which attempt to justify or rationalise forms of domination and make them seem natural and eternal" (p.106). The latter definition also allows me to use discourses as a means of explaining how power works in and through the students.

Borrowed Blackness–Diasporan Identities

Although, as indicated in chapters four and five, the students construct a sense of, transnational, diasporan blackness, this sense of blackness is one that is influenced by understandings of symbolic forms constructed via youth culture in the United States. Relations of domination are evident in the ways in which the US comes to represent a sense of blackness within the lives of the students. Such a placing of African American cultural formation within the Canadian context means that in some ways the African American discourses of blackness seem to dominate in an almost hegemonic sense wherein Canadian identity is often interpreted in relation to her US counterpart. This phenomenon is not new, Andre Alexis (1995), in his article "Borrowed Blackness," has alluded to the complex relationship and importance of the US in the lives of African Canadians. For him black American identity is portrayed as a universal identity for all blacks. He argues further that:

> Canada is often invisible in American writing, black Canada even more so, and it seems to me that black Canadians react to that invisibility in at least two ways. One way is to assume that we *are* all included in definitions of "New World Africa" reality, that Canada is America (but *pianissimo*) and that bell hooks and Derrick Bell are speaking about (louder) versions of our experiences. The other way is by trying to sing, dance or write Canada for ourselves, to define our own terrain and situation. (p. 17, original emphasis)

Looking specifically at Toronto, Alexis argues that intellectually there is a strong alignment with the United States and that blacks are conceptualised by mainstream Canadians as a recent phenomenon from the United States which has crept North or emigrated from Africa. This tension in terms of the projection of US experiences onto Canada is also evident in discussions of Canadian literary criticism. As George Elliott Clarke (1996) reveals:

> . . . denials of what I term African Canadianite illuminate the dynamic dilemma of African Canadian culture. Euro-Canadian critics consider it as Other, while African American (and Caribbean) critics read it - unabashedly - as extensions of their own. To complicate matters further, African Canadians utilise African-American texts and historical cultural icons to define their own

> experiences (a fact which can seduce the unwary in to believing that no uniquely African-Canadian perspective exists). (p. 57)

This belief that no uniquely African-Canadian experiences exist can be seen in the ways in which students orient themselves to an African Canadian identity. For some students, the lack of recognition of a historical presence of blackness within Canada reinforces the sense of blackness as "other." Even for those students whose ancestry is in Canada it is difficult to identify any symbolic representation within Canadian society with which they can align themselves. Thus for some students Canadian identity is not readily available, and citizenship does not translate into a national identity.

Theorist Benedict Anderson argues that rather than being innate such identities are imagined through specific symbols that are constructed in relation to the nation, and that as such it is more than a political entity it also produces meanings, a system of cultural representation (Hall, 1991, p. 292). Barker (1999), argues that:

> National identities are a constitutive representation of shared experiences and history told thorough stories, literature, popular culture and of course television . . . . Such narratives emphasise the traditions and continuity of the nation as being "in the nature of things", though they may be "invented" traditions including the foundational myth of collective origins. (p. 68)

Barker's myth of collective origins seems to have stymied the students in terms of how they position themselves in relation to, or within, a specific discourse on national identity. Within the narratives, the conception of a national Canadian identity is constructed as problematic for the students. There is no smooth transition from being official citizens of Canada to an acceptance of such a national identity. For students, such as Etta and Doreen in chapters four and five, a national identity is constructed through discourses on historical origins and roots. As Henry Giroux (1996) argues:

> National identity has all too often been forged within popular memory as a discourse that too neatly links nations, culture, and citizenship in a seamless and unproblematic unity. Invoking claims to the past in which the politics of remembering and forgetting work powerfully to legitimate a notion of national belonging that "constructs the nation as an ethnically homogenous object. (p. 189)

The ways that the students identify, or not, with a specific national identity is related to context as well as the availability of symbolic representations with which they can identify. Thus taking on identification with Jamaica, or Trinidad varies according to the racialised identity of the questioner as well as the geographic context of the social exchange. While the latter fluidity in identification might subscribe to

Hall's evocation that "identities are about becoming" such variability in identification does not imply a totally decentred sense of self. While "post modern politics of temporary alliances, partial identities, is attractive as against the dyed-in-the-wool prejudice and exclusions of xenophobia, racism and sexism; alliances and affinities mark some degree of ongoing identity and commitment, however provisional" (A Glossary of Feminist Theory, 1997, p. 125). These provisional alliances and affinities among the students, like identification, was also dependent upon context so that while at times they regarded themselves as black at other times a national identity related to geographic location would emerge as a suffix and qualifier of their blackness. Often these national identities emerge at times when a relation of dominance is most evident. For example, in chapter five, the ways in which some young women whose ancestries are located in islands other than Jamaica indicated a closer alignment with differing genres of Caribbean music to make a distinction between themselves and Jamaicans. Thus these young women's identification with genres such as soca and calypso, as opposed to reggae indicated a difference from Jamaica. The narratives indicate that this tension between Jamaica and other smaller Caribbean islands is attributed, as one Jamaican student suggested, to "our community is popular…its more well-known." This dominance of Jamaican identity in Canada is based on media construction and hyper visibility of Jamaicans, the size of population in relation to other islands, as well as the popularisation of reggae since the 1970s.

This relation of dominance is not just between students with Caribbean ancestry, further intra black distinctions are also evident within the data as students identify how the use of jokes displaces tensions between the different national groups. Such tensions seem to be based on the common sense understandings of Africa and the Caribbean constructed through discourses in wider society. Many of these discourses construct Africa in particular as "backward" and a "nation" lacking in technology and consumer goods. Within a few students' narratives, youth culture is drawn on in order to code such jokes and contour meanings around discussions of "Africa" and "development." The latter process is illustrated in chapter four, where one student identifies how access to consumer goods such as "Nike" is equated with modernity and thus links development to a North American context. In opposite to the latter position, Africa is posited as lacking in consumer goods, a "lack" which is consequently used to position it as "not modern." Such an understanding of the African continent in some ways reflects the existing relations of dominance within society, regardless of the students' identification as black. The latter understanding also identifies that there is no automatic alignment between black identity and Africa. It would therefore be difficult to align the students consistently with what Paul Gilroy (1995) calls:

> . . . a diasporan consciousness, in which identity is focussed less on equalising, proto-democratic force of common territory and more on the social dynamics

> of remembrance and commemoration defined by a strong sense of the dangers involved in the forgetting the location of origin and the process of dispersal. (p. 318)

Afrocentrics such as Molefi Kete Asante (1989) argue that "regardless of our various complexions and degrees of consciousness we are, by virtue of commitments, history, and convictions, an African people" (p. 27). While Afrocentrics would see the site of origins of all these students as the continent of Africa, in actuality many students recognise that they have undergone a process of "translation" (Bhabha, 1994). Their identity is more hybrid than fixed historically. For the students with Caribbean ancestry, a return to the past was a return to the Caribbean. There is no sense of a return to Africa as the spiritual home of blacks. Wayne, in chapter four, recognises that he has a past familial connection with the continent, but he perceives no tangible cultural links that would position him as African. Jamaica, his last port of call, is a society within which public recognition of African roots has always been contested. As a colony of Britain, Jamaica was a primary site for the dissemination and reproduction of racist discourses on Africa. Racialisation and production of the "other" was active throughout all segments of society. Jan Pieterse (1992), in analysing these discourses, illustrates his case with reference to Edward Long, a questionable nineteenth-century scientific authority on African slaves. Long's basic argument was that:

> European and black do not belong to the same species. Black children like animals matured more rapidly than whites; mulattos in his view were infertile– a belief widely held at that time . . . . Long divided the genus homo into three categories: Europeans and other humans, blacks, and orangutans. (p. 41)

It is hardly surprising that discursive formations of the hierarchy of races should also be active within slave and colonised societies. Subjugation of an African presence was, historically, a part of the dominant discourse among Jamaicans of African descent. This negation of an African ancestry remained until the 1960s, with the growth and rise of the Black Power movement in the US, and the consequent growth in acceptance of Rastafarians in the 1970s through popularity of the music and personality of Bob Marley. Stuart Hall's article "Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation" identifies how Jamaica has more recently claimed a sense of blackness. In his childhood this was not evident. As he recalls, "although almost everyone around me was some shade of brown or black (Africa "Speaks"!), I never once heard a single person refer to themselves or others as, in some way, as having been at some time in the past, African" (1996, p. 216).

For those students born in Africa, or whose heritage is more recently from the African continent, identification with the continent was more readily accepted.

However, this identification was hybridised and in line with other students of the diaspora. They also strongly identified with hip-hop culture. This is not surprising in that such identification offers the possibility of an immediate sense of community (Ibrahim, 2000). These students with close familial links to the continent seem not to use music or dress style as a source of identification with countries in Africa. However, it also cannot be read that they were totally assimilated into Canadian society, since they may well draw on other sources and resources to give meaning to an African identity.

A number of the students were of mixed heritage but defined as black. For these students, an actual return to the continent did not bring automatic acceptance. They were recognised as "diasporan" and not African; cultural markers such as language and colour revealed that they were "translated" Africans (Bhabha, 1994). Hall's conception of black identity as operating along vectors of sameness and difference coheres with the ways in which the students constructed their identities. These intragroup differences were not evident at all times but tended to emerge during social situations that highlight a tension between individual identity and group identity. Although this identification of a black/national self through different consumption patterns was primarily among the young women, I would urge caution in attributing this difference as due only to gender, since non-Jamaican, but Caribbean, girls were overrepresented in the sample.

While the student narratives constructed blacks as a group with a plurality of identities, they also indicated that "black music" was a common source of identification. The descriptor black music is itself, however, highly problematic. As Keith Negus (1996) argues:

> It is out of . . . struggles, arising from unequal relations of economic and cultural power, that black music has been made. Black music has become an important category because of conditions of oppression, segregation and ghettoisation and due to the way that a particular population has had to live and make meaning within and across "racialised boundaries" (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). While there is racism, social segregation and economic inequality, the term "black music" will continue to have resonance as a signifier of a culture created out of these experiences. (p. 112)

Negus's comments, interestingly, undermine many "essentialist" claims to purity, in terms of music creation, while also questioning a direct association between skin colour and musical genre. This problematisation is also illustrated in student narratives, which draw on discourses of purity, while revealing identification with a plurality of black-identified musical genres such as r&b, rap, reggae, soca, and calypso. As forms of music created primarily by people who identify themselves as black, it might be more accurate to use a plural descriptor for black music, thus emphasising its heterogeneous rather than homogenous construction. The similarities that exist within these musical forms are social as much as stylistic, since the musical genres created by blacks arise out of differing social contexts. Where the musical genres identified by the students cross and intersect, such cultural crossings can be attributed to a movement of humans through a process of migration and immigration. This is evident in the musical choices identified by the students, where musical genres such as rap and reggae are cultural formations that draw on areas of a Black Atlantic (Gilroy, 1993) An understanding of black-identified music as purely static and fixed within a geographic region becomes problematic when one notes the concrete ways in which musical genres draw on a variety of Black Atlantic influences. Much-acclaimed Jamaican dance hall singer Beenie Man, who has managed to transfer his skills to the US, remarks on these diasporan links between musical genres represented as Jamaican and musical genres represented as American:

> I say hip-hop is American dancehall . . . Busta Rhymes dem is Jamaican. Canibus is Jamaican. Slick Rick is Jamaican, Biggie Smalls is Jamaican. You're talking about some of the roughest rappers in the business who is Jamaican. So catch the link from there. It's just the same ting; it's the same vibe. (Beenie Man, cited in *The Source* No 108, September, 1998)

Such postulations as to the hybrid nature of music can also be seen in Nelson George's analysis of the origins of rap music; being identified as a pure African-American creation negates the plurality of its construction. While accepting this hybrid rather than any singular source of black music formation, it should also be noted that there is an element of what Gilroy identifies as the "changing same" of culture. This changing same involves:

> . . . the paradox of ethnic sameness and heterogeneity. This is the paradox that the recognition of a shared culture and history (rather than biological or "racial" essence) combines with a sense of the deep divergences and differences encompassed by the term "black." (Hall, 1990, p. 223)

There are also similarities in terms of black experiences that cross national borders. This is, perhaps, why the students consistently identified music as a source of unification. However, there is no inherent transcendental essence to black music that remains the same over time. As Negus notes, the social conditions of black experience give them their source for musical developments. Conditions of oppression, segregation, ghettoisation, and the way that a particular population has had to live and make meaning within and across racialised boundaries are important components of musical development. Gilroy (1995) also notes the ways in which music is identified as indicating the essence of blackness, yet as a cultural form expresses hybridity rather than uniformity:

> It is also in music that the most intense legacy of the African past is concentrated and though the significance of that legacy is open to dispute, the link itself is impossible to refute. It is important, then, that the area of cultural production, which is most evidently identified with racial authenticity and Black particularity is also the most mutable and adaptive forms. (p. 25)

It should also be noted that there was no real attempt among the students to represent themselves as distinctly Canadian through musical choices, even for those who were aware of the relations of dominance between the US and Canada. The dominance of the US in music production, via rap and r&b, was interrupted only by reggae, a product of Jamaica. Although the students from North America and the Caribbean are part of an African diaspora, there is little recognition, knowledge, or musical identification with the continent. Such a lack of connection may undermine the students' ability to view music as constructed in a social formation.

Overall, the students' identities can be viewed as hybrid, in that they position themselves in a variety of ways and draw on the diaspora as well as national formations as sources for a black identity. Their identities encompass cultural responses ranging from assimilation, through forms of separation, to hybrids that stabilise and blur cultural boundaries. However, as Barker (1999) notes in chapter two, such cultural hybridity does not represent the "erasure of boundaries, and we need to be sensitive to both cultural differences and to forms of identification that involve recognition of similarities" (Barker, p. 70).

Regime of Representation

Having identified the ways that the students orient themselves to the diaspora and the continent, in this section of the chapter I interpret my data analysis with regard to Stuart Hall's phrase "regime of representation." Here, I move on to examine youth culture to ascertain the ways in which blackness is represented across a "regime" constructed through magazines, music videos, and rap music. Such construction has implications for identity formation, and contours relations of dominance between the US and Canada. The examination illustrates the ways in which a focus on individual consumption can move into areas of economic contestation and hegemony.

The students indicate that music is a common source of identification. Rap, reggae, r&b as a musical form and hip-hop as a cultural formation are important in terms of black youth culture and providing symbolic representations and codes through which black identification is produced. If one looks across the various media forms, one can identify what Hall (1997) describes as a "racialised regime of representation." Television music videos and music magazines mediate style, images, and representations of hip-hop culture and blackness between the music industry and its consumers. This process of mediation is:

> facilitated by the development of digital storage techniques and satellites, telecommunication technologies are also playing an increasingly important role in mediating popular music by enabling phone-line musical competition between artists, computer-networked dialogues among fans, and the production of "interactive" musical material by musicians. (Negus, 1996, p. 68)

These mediums percolate knowledge and experiences that come to form part of a storehouse of ideas. Concepts can then be drawn on in terms of meaning-making and representations of self and others. Opening up Canadian borders to US-dominated images extends the meaning-making repertoire that the students have at their behest. Thompson's concept of mediazation is evident in the ways in which the students' narratives identify information and culture as transported across borders via various media forms. These media forms have enabled a general development and flow of images. In the case of blacks, this exposure has increased the accessibility of black images to a much wider audience than in previous eras. Unlike earlier black-inspired musical forms such as jazz or blues, rap as part of hip-hop is a child of the electronic and televisual age and is accessible to a much wider audience. In support of the latter, Nelson George (1998) argues that in the US:

> . . . compared to the exposure white entertainers like Glen Campbell, Sonny and Cher, or Tony Orlando could achieve, black music was only briefly and often in a culturally hostile environment. Videos, in contrast, are repeated endlessly and usually presented by hosts who feel kinship to the culture. The images, just like the music, have a just off the street immediacy that excites kids in Iowa and Tokyo just as much as those in South Central Los Angeles. (p. 102)

This digital linking of geographic areas provides a common space within which specific cultural codes can be produced, reproduced and drawn on. As John Storey (1996) suggests:

> . . . what makes meaning production possible are the shared cultural codes upon which both the producers and consumers of an image are able to draw. Connotations are not simply produced by the makers of the image, but are activated from an already existing and shared cultural repertoire and at the same time adds to it. (p. 92)

One of the effects of these waves of hip-hop culture emanating from the U.S., via satellite, cable, or magazines, is that African-American youth have become identified with "authentic" hip-hop and rap. This coding is contoured in two ways. First, in comparison with the US, the students lack consistent exposure to Canadian rap via magazines, music videos, and rap music. Second, the construction of "authenticity" occurs around US-based media culture. The narratives of the students support the position that access to Canadian rappers is primarily via cable channels. Both *RapCity* [1] and Xten*DaMix*[2] are aired on the Canadian-owned MuchMusic station and have a mandate to "give Canadian urban artists much-needed exposure." Nonetheless, the videos shown construct the meanings of rap via the air play and visibility given to African-American rap groups and rappers. With regard to the construction of "authenticity," meaning operates via a system of representation that is constructed and then fixed by a code that sets up the "correlation between our conceptual system and our language" (Hall, 1997, p. 21). In the case under discussion, codes developed around concepts of "geographic location" and "experiences" are used in order to fix such meanings around hip-hop and rap. As Hall (1997) suggests, with reference to children becoming cultural subjects:

> . . . they learn the system and conventions of representation, the codes of their language and culture, which equip them with cultural "know-how" enabling them to function as culturally competent subjects . . . . They unconsciously internalise the codes which allow them to express certain concepts and ideas through their system of representation–writing, speech, gesture, visualisation, and so on–and to interpret ideas which are communicated to them using the same systems. (p. 22)

Hip-hop based upon African American experiences reinforces the relations of dominance between US-generated rap and its Canadian sister. As implied in the following comments by Master T, vee-jay and producer of *RapCity* and Xten*DaMix*, "Canadian artists have learned their craft and they are stepping to the plate . . . . I get e-mails from Ohio requesting *Rascalz*[3]. This is cool–America's watching!" (Hayashi-Tennant, 1999). Master T's comment demonstrates that discourses of rap construct and reinforce the presentation of the US as a source of authentic rap. Validation and the worth of Canadian rap is determined by a source external to itself (i.e. the United States). This need for recognition and external validation results in further marginalisation of Canadian rappers and a consequent undermining of their ability to position themselves in relation to the US rappers as "authentic.[4]" Even though the Canadian rappers of African descent might rap about their experiences in Toronto or Vancouver, such experiences are coded as "softer" than the authentic representations that emerge from the US-based production studios[5]. This sense of the "authentic also comes into play if Canadian rappers try to imitate US rappers. Ivan Berry, a Toronto-based expert on the rap scene, argues that for Canadian rappers to be successful abroad, they have to be uniquely Canadian. He continues, "why would any American label release a Canadian signed artist if it's the same type of sh** they could go around the corner and sign in America" (Matthews, 1998).

This positioning of Canada in relation to the US can also be seen in the narratives of the students in chapters five and six, where they identify with magazines that "present deep knowledge" and align themselves with discourses of "true" or commercial rap. To undermine and contest this relation of economic dominance, some Canadian rappers have formed independent record labels, such as Treehouse Records, and Knee Deep Records, but these cannot compete with larger American corporations. Adam Matthews (1998) notes that "in the last few years Sony, BMG and Virgin have created full-fledged urban departments, but there are no urban departments with the authority to sign artists. These departments have been put in place to market and promote American records" (p. 71).

While the regime of representation offers the black students a resource through which to identify, it also provides fertile grounds for other racialised groups to develop an "understanding" of blackness based upon racialised stereotypes.

The students learn codes as part of their culture–a specific youth culture that is contoured through regimes of representation. As indicated in chapters six through to nine, meaning is produced through regimes of representation mediated by magazines, music, and television music videos. These media representations enable students to code and construct common understandings. They provide a language through which meaning is produced. Although not discussed in detail in chapter six, reality television programs such as *Cops* or the news programs, local and North American, also play a part in constructing common conceptual codes. Himani Bannerji (1995) identifies such a process of construction as active in Toronto newspapers:

> One only needs a periodic look at the Toronto Sun, for example, or the television, to see what images and assumptions are circulated by the popular media among masses of people both black and white. Stereotypes range from "yellow peril" to "black (now Asian) criminality," and are cultural lenses through which communities are viewed and introduced to each other literally via media. Mis-or disinformation crowd the news and other television programmes, while the fashion industry, sports and music equate black people with the body and the natural gift for rhythm, and the Chinese with an innate propensity to do well in mathematics. (p. 155)

In terms of Canadian society, the hypervisibility of Jamaicans is related primarily to their criminalisation through the media in Toronto. Henry and Tator's (2000)[6] study on "Racist Discourse in Canada's Media" argues that:

> The case study of the racialisation of crime reveals the complex vocabulary of crime-related language that includes phrases like "cultural deviance, Jamaican or Black crime." The press creates a sense of moral panic in which isolated cases of violence are represented as an indication of a profound societal crisis that imperils the nation. (p. iv)

This regime of representation is available as a source for constructing images of blackness, not just for the black student, but for the wider society. This construction of black identity as hypermasculine is surrounded with ambivalence, since youths also suggest that through regime of representation, it connotes both fear and desire among their peers. Some of the males indicate that they were identified more readily in malls, other shops, and other public spaces.

Such production of meaning is not homogenous when the students put the media representations to work in the name of identity construction. We find that the discourse of style can be used not only to present specific social and individual identities, but also to produce collective identities such as those illustrated in the north /south demarcation of urban space (chapter seven). It is evident that the language used by the students in this demarcation of urban space is provided by hood movies, rap music, and magazines. Coded to their own specific location, the discursive formation that is produced relates to socio-economic status as well as urban space, a production based on "us" and "them." The latter is repeated across various student narratives in chapter eight. In analysing the sense of blackness that the students garner through a regime of representation, one finds that it is constructed through African American experiences, since that is the source of much of the music videos, films, and types of music to which the students listen. In some ways, Andre Alexis' term of "borrowed blackness" seems to describe what is taking place in relation to defining a sense of blackness in Canada.

This construction of borrowed blackness can be seen as hegemonic, as a relation of power, in that it:

> . . . is not a process of active domination as much as an active structuring of the culture and experiences of the subordinate class by the dominant class. The dominant culture is able to "frame" the ways in which subordinate groups live and respond to their cultural system and lived experiences; in other words, the dominant culture is able to manufacture dreams and desires for both dominant and subordinate groups by supplying "terms of reference" (i.e., images, visions, stories ideals) against which all individuals are expected to live their lives. (McLaren, 1994, p. 183)

While historically African-Canadian identity has always been formed in relation to African-American identity, and while the two identities have much in common in terms of experiences of exclusion and racism, there are also differences based on understandings of national heritage.

It is noticeable across these regimes of representation that it is a black male identity that is constructed. This is evident not only in hood films, and "booty/playa" films that are constructed from a male heterosexual perspective, but also in gangsta rap, the mass media, and mainstream black leadership. US black leaders such as Louis Farrakhan commonly cast the problems of the inner city as problems of males, problems that can be corrected via assertion of patriarchal relations (Kelley, 1994, p. 217). Consequently, women's experiences are marginalised in much of the youth culture that the students consume. As well, gangsta rap's lyrics often devalue and demean women. Tricia Rose (1994) suggests that "many men are hostile towards women because the fulfilment of male heterosexual desire is significantly checked by women's capacity for sexual rejection or manipulation of men" (p. 172). On the other hand, Kobena Mercer (1994) sees this hostility as related to constructions of masculinity and the dominance of black male experiences. He argues that, "the master-codes of a race-relations narrative . . . depends on gender polarisation and the denigration of black women in order to emblematise black male experiences as "representative of black experiences as a whole" (p.167).

While the young men's narratives were not overtly misogynist in content, they did attempt to legitimate rather than condemn such gangsta rap lyrics. Drawing on the codes of "reality" constructed across and through regimes of representation they argue that the lyrics describe "real" women who have cheated on personal friends or used them in order to gain material goods. The following focus group discussion illustrates this process through one young man's recollection of his negative experiences with a young woman:

> Student 1: *There was something wrong with that girl. She asked me out, she acted all interested, and I turned round and she was gone. I wasn't chasing her or nothing.*
> Student 2: *Whoa! deep [clicking finger].*
> Student 1: *She was with Jake and he taped her. Taped her? And black girls are wondering why guys won't go out with them [sarcastically].*
> Student 3: *Its not just black girls.*
> Student 1: *It's not true, but that's what you think about. Same as girls think black guys are just into . . . .*

Rappers themselves use such discourses of legitimation, as illustrated by the following response of rapper *Eightball* to a charge of promoting misogyny in his lyrics:

> Well, those critics who say that need to go with us one night. That would explain everything. I mean, how many times do we have to say that we ain't talking about all women . . . . Man you go to the club today, there are women

> out there–and make sure you put this in here–there is a group of women out there that will do anything to a nigga in the limelight, and that's who we are talkin' 'bout. You really have to be there to understand it man. All that sh** that we talk about, it's a group of women out there who make those statements true. (Braxton, 1998, pp. 89-90)

A corollary to the strong construction of black identity as male within youth culture is an emphasis on heterosexuality as a norm. This construction and reinforcement of relations of dominance through regime of representation takes place primarily via rap, dance hall reggae, and the films that the students watch (see chapters six to nine). However, media are not the only sites where discourses of heterosexuality are normalised. Religious discourses reinforce this construction of lesbians and homosexuals as outside the "norm" of society, as is illustrated by the students' reactions to films such as *Set it Off* (refer to chapter seven). Even within the limited discourses that the school supports, the norm of heterosexuality is strongly asserted:

> Student: *Last year when I was in my CALM*[7] *class, like the teacher said we have like "Disagree" here, we have "Agree" here, and "Not so sure" here. And the teacher asked that question like, "If a bunch of gay children were just migrating to here, and were all coming to this school. Would we accept them into the school?" And I tell you 95 percent of the class went to agree.*
> J: *That they would accept them in the class?*
> Student: *Yeah,95 percent. That was a [laugh] oh, and like let me see how many–like just a few went to disagree. Not a few, about four of us. And about ten or so went to "not so sure." It was really surprising, man. So, it's just like they will accept anything. It's really bad.*

It might be argued that as blacks who might have experienced the hurt caused by use of a derogatory term such as "nigger," these students would be more attuned to homophobic slurs such as faggot. This was not the case. As illustrated by the conversation in the following male focus group, acknowledging the inappropriate use of racial epithets does not mean the direct transfer of such recognition to other derogatory terms such as "faggot."

> Student 1: *One of my English teachers, Ms. B., she actually asked me, how did I feel when people call me a nigger. In a classroom! So I am like it doesn't really affect me, but I don't like people to call me that. Then she said "Why do you call people faggot and gay?" ('Cuz I was making fun of some gay person in the class). Right. So then I am like well there is a big difference between nigger and gay. Then she said something like "Nigger." Now don't you feel bad. That's like the same as somebody going gay or faggot. There's big difference with that word. She tries to compare that word together. You can't do that.*
> Student 2: *You should cut her down man. Put her in her place.*

> J: *What do you feel about use of that word nigger?*
> Student 3: *Big difference between fag and nigger. Fag, you can be any race because you are weird. Call a guy nigger, I look it up in the dictionary, it means something that gets in the way of progress, that's what nigger means. To call some one that, it's way more than calling someone gay. Most time you call some one gay, you don't mean it. You don't know if a person is gay. They might talk like a girl, walk like a girl, but you don't know. Then you can guess.*
> Student 2: *I can joke around with a friend and I can say, "Oh you are gay," and we will laugh about it. Can joke around with the same friend and say "You nigger," we'll laugh about it. When it's offensive is when the person means it. Like someone could call me gay and mean it, and it wouldn't offend me much because I know I am not gay. If someone calls me nigger and means it, that's a different story that's a bigger insult. Being called gay doesn't mean any thing. There are people out there who are gay, but I don't think there is anyone out there that's a nigger.*
> J: *What if that person doesn't want to be called gay?*
> Student 3: *You can't choose not to be black but you can choose not to be gay.*

The latter commentary illustrates how problematic it is to see relations of oppression as equivalent/same in terms of their construction and representation. Some cultural theorists would imply that to teach about oppression in general is an effective strategy to transform students' levels of consciousness about social justice. However, the ways in which the students racialised and sexualised identities intersect. They make a simple "one fits all" solution of oppression highly problematic and unlikely to be effective. When the latter is examined in relation to some of the narratives that discuss the film *Set it Off*, one is able to see that such discourses do not operate in isolation. In this case, students call on religious belief in conjunction with youth culture to construct gays and lesbians as "other," and thus produce/reproduce themselves as heterosexual. The students would seem to be more open to acknowledging oppression when it relates directly to their sense of self. This entrenchment of "othering" is hardly surprising with regard to sexuality, if one concurs with social theorists such as Lacan who postulate that that the "other" is necessary in order to bring one's subjectivity into being.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has interpreted and reinterpreted the students' doxa, opinions and beliefs as reproduced in the narratives. By undertaking such reinterpretation, I am able to apply the concepts discussed in chapters one and two in order to highlight relations of dominance. I draw on the concept of "borrowed blackness" to illustrate the ways in which African-American youth identity has become the universal in terms of blackness. The representation of blackness constructed through youth culture is hegemonic and interacts with the dominant discourses of the American media. The process of identity formation outside the context of nation-state is identified by Giddens (1991) as what makes modern society unique, in that identity is tied to events and activity perceived from a distance in space and time. Further, Giddens identifies how, increasingly, networks of remote associations that serve to define and affirm self-identity are supplanting local attachments and affiliations. At times, as in the step-team (chapter five), these students use knowledge of black, lived experiences as a form of cultural capital to exclude other racialised groups from activities, while at other times they use music as a way of maintaining national and continental differences within the group.

In the next chapter I will continue to examine the students' doxa, but this time through the concept of "stylish solidarity. " In relation to the concept, I try to ascertain the extent to which the students have a sense of blackness coded through dress and what this might mean for black identity in the diaspora.

Notes

---

[1] *RapCity* is a program, concentrating on the genre of rap and closely –related hybrids (rap, reggae, "hip-hop" in general. A relatively "political program in the content of videos broadcast and VeeJay Michael Williams' commentary, " the definitive look at hip-hop and rap. Documents the artists, issues and lifestyles surrounding today's most exciting new forms of music.

[2] XtenDaMix is a program concentrating on dance music and intersects with such genres as reggae and R7B. This program is unique in that only here are n=more thatn three videos broadcast consecutively. As many as six videos are commonly played back to back, possibly in aid of the program's use as dance , music practice (p.170)

[3] *Rascalz* is a Canadian rap group which has developed a consistent following. Celine Wong (1998) indicates that Mastermind Street Jam is the sole hip-hop show on commercial radio. In an interview with Ms. Wong, host Paul Parhar expressed the view that "I think the reason Toronto hasn't exploded is because of the lack of radio stations." Celine Wong continues, "due to the sparse nature of commercial programming, community/university radio stations have thankfully established themselves as hip-hop institutions.

[4] *RapPages* article by Adam Matthews Northern Exposure suggests that "hip-hop market in Canada is very narrow. The total population of Canada is approximately 25 million. A gold album in Canada means sales of 50, 000 copies as compared to 500, 00in the US, Video Fact, a quasi-government organization that provides grants to artists to make videos, funds most videos. The grants are usually$12,000 to $15,000-chump change when compared to high budget US productions. Even winning the rap Juno doesn't equal success in the US (p.71).

[5] This dominance applies to most forms of western mass-produced music.

[6] Carol Tator and Frances Henry have recently completed a study of "Racist Discourse in Canada's English Print Media." Findings include: people of colour are underrepresented and largely invisible ion the media; when people of colour do appear in media coverage, the are often misrepresented and stereotyped; the executive coproratist nature of the media influences the kind of news that id produced and disseminated (Executive Summary March, 2000).

[7] Career and Life Management Skills (CALM) is a course that is required for all high school students. Its intention is to give students an understanding of necessary skills for survival as adults.

Chapter 11

Stylish Solidarity

Introduction

This chapter identifies three themes through which the students struggle to create and give meaning to their lives. The three chosen themes are: "Slangs Slurs and Development of a Public Sphere," "Stylish Solidarity," and "Knowledge and Experience." First, youth culture as a communicative resource indicates the ways in which the students use slang and slurs to develop an argot, a common culture that is produced/reproduced in a public sphere. Second, stylish solidarity draws on Gilroy (2000) to illustrate the ways in which black youth culture has become identified with the body and style. A sense of collectivity based on style rather than on a more direct, politicised understanding. Third, knowledge and experience indicate the intertextual nature of the way in which meaning gets translated from one social situation to another. All three indicate the intersubjective basis of assigning meaning to social situations. They draw on a variety of identifications and differentiation that the students make during their lives. Some of these themes highlight black identification, while others highlight gender, sexuality and age.

The students' narratives portray themselves as active rather than passive recipients of media culture and meaning making. "Meaning in this context is not something which is given or which can be taken for granted. It is manufactured out of historically shifting systems of codes, conventions and signs" (Strinati, 1995, p. 110). They do not subscribe to Adorno's fears of the mass stupification of society in the interests of what he identified as the "culture industries." Gordon (1980) argues that Foucault's theorisation suggests domination works not so much through "ideological mystification" as through its ability to define a certain field of empirical truth." (p. 237)

Slang, Slurs & Development of a Public Sphere

The narratives suggest that youth culture provides a language that operates through slangs and slurs. This language is articulated among and between the students within what can be described as a "public sphere." For Thompson (1990), a public sphere is a place:

> in which issues [are] debated and positions challenged. It was in the cleared space of the public sphere that the discourse of ideologies appeared, constituting organised systems of beliefs which offered coherent interpretation of social and political phenomena. (p. 80)

This public sphere provides a space for the contestation and production of empirical truths or "regimes." For these students, the school acts as a site for the exchange of language within the public sphere.

Television, magazines, and music provide a language, verbal and nonverbal, through which students communicate. This language of communication enables one to engage in a public discourse–to talk. Throughout the narratives, the students use phrases and metaphors, slang, and idioms derived from media culture to communicate with peers. Phrases such as "being a playa," "playa-hating" "hoochie," "Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve." Status can be gained from being able to engage with and wield such terms in the general day-to-day conversation within peer groups. Media provide common experiences that extend beyond the local to become local/global. Television programs, music videos, and music magazines act as a communicative resource for school-based discussions among the students and their peers. Media provide a source of content for social interaction, reinforcing the need for students to continue to watch the program so that they will "have something to talk about." The ability to join in the conversation of such a media-constructed community enables the positioning of oneself within an actual community of peers. Cultural theorist Paddy Scannel argues that:

> . . . broadcasting has brought the private into the public, re-socialising the public domain, making it a space in which talk for talk's sake, talk for enjoyment, talk as a sociable activity has its place alongside talk that is informative, that is getting its message across, that is trying to persuade [...] . [These] sociable forms of interaction sustain a world that is, if not more rational in a formal and theoretical sense, altogether more reasonable. (1990, pp. 20-21)

This public sphere provides a space where gender, race, class, and other key social relations are connected and reproduced via talk. Media offer powerful sources for the presentation and representation of images that increase the cultural repertoire available to students. However, as Gilroy (1995) argues, it also has to be recognised that this source of representation and the symbolic does not mean an automatic identification:

> Black popular culture does not determine the formation of social and cultural identities in any mechanistic ways, but it supplies a variety of

> symbolic, linguistic, textual, gestural and above all, musical resources that are used by people to shape their identities, truths and models of community. (p. 25)

Gilroy' postulation is evident throughout the students' narratives as they consume and produce meanings through what he identifies as "black popular culture." Willis (1990) would seem to concur with Gilroy's summation as to the importance of popular /youth culture for purposes of identification, as well as providing a public sphere. As he sees it:

> Popular music can be a conversational resource. The knowledge of lyrics, dress styles and genres is often used as the coins of exchange in casual talk. By listening to music together and using it as a background to their lives, by expressing affiliation to particular taste groups, popular music becomes one of the principal means by which young people define themselves. (Willis, 1990)

Construction of this public sphere through youth culture is not unproblematic however, since the youth culture that is consumed through the process of mediazation is American rather than Canadian. Thus, the students are exposed to a broadening of the public sphere that is contoured by conceptions and experiences garnered in the US. Magazines also construct discourses that are active in the public sphere. In terms of the commodification debate we can note how the rapper in the hip-hop magazine *Rap Pages* constructs similar discourses for the students. The following extract illustrates how discourses of commodification echo the sentiments of the students:

> Ali isn't too thrilled with the current state of affairs in Hip-Hop, and he doesn't hold his tongue about it either. "As far as Hip-Hop is concerned, its about love for my car, for me getting ahead at all costs, to whatever extent. If it's at the expense of another brother, then whatever. That's not good. We're supposed to be together in what ever it is our endeavours are, and not stepping on the next human being. It's just a lot of egos, a lot of arrogance in the music. (Abdul-Lateef, 1998 p. 78)

Throughout the students' narratives there is some evidence to support Jakobson's postulation that meaning is constructed through the fundamental modes of metaphors and metonyms. Such language allows classification and differentiation from others by making parts represent the whole syntagmatically (metonymy) and drawing attention to similarities as well as differences (metaphor) to make one group stand in place of another. These tropes relate primarily to sexuality as well as gender relations, and may well allow students to talk around and about topics that might otherwise be taboo within a public space. In listening to the narratives, it becomes obvious that hip-hop/youth culture uses a specific language as part of the hip-hop discourse, and that the ability of the students to use this language allows them to present themselves within or in relation to subject positions. As part of accessing a style, communication, via argot, enables the formation of a group identity and the creation of boundaries between "them" and "us." Ibrahim (2000) has noted in his research with a group of Franco-Ontarian youths recently from continental Africa how important accessing Black Stylized English (BSE) is in being able to perform a black identity. As Ibrahim explains it, this BSE:

> . . . refers to ways of speaking that do not depend on full mastery of the language [of Black English] it banks on ritual; expressions such as whassup, whadup, whassup my Nigger, yo, yo home boy, which are performed habitually and recurrently in rap. (2000, p. 119)

Within my study, the students most recently from the continent did adopt hip-hop dress styles popular in North American youth culture. They were also familiar with the slangs and slurs of BSE. However, the extent to which they used slang and slurs varied during daily interaction. With many of the students there were variations in usage of BSE, and this may well reflect the way in which style was weighted most heavily in term sof representing blackness. While use of BSE indicated a sense of style, not using slang was at times regarded favourably, by some, as a sign of maturity. The following student identifies the way in which people talk with what he identifies as an "accent." In the following narrative I check what he means by having an accent:

> J: *"Wha's up man?"*
> Student: *Yeah, that! Everyone already talks sort of like that. I don't know why. Like here the demographic is kinda like black is cool. To be acting black is to act "cool."*
> J: *Is it?*

As he continues, he makes a distinction between those who act black and those who do not:

> Student: *But like also Langston, he is a respectable guy. He doesn't have to act like anything.*
> J: *He acts like himself you think?*
> Student: *I like that. I respect that about him. He's a good [neat] guy.*

The narrative highlights the way in which the ability to use this argot is important in "performing" blackness, and also in placing one within the student-driven school hierarchy of styles. Argot and slang are complex concepts in that while their purpose is to maintain and mark distinction, this is often achieved by a delicate balance between change and continuity in use. One illustration of the changing nature of the language among some of the students occurred during a focus group interview where one young man was constantly using the rap-inspired phrase "pimping ain't easy" during his first interview and by the second, had changed to a more gangsta-inspired phrase. While the argot used by the students enables communication, it was also a medium that was constantly changing. The ability to be up-to-date with the latest argot was to represent one's self as stylish. Speed is also important. The media, especially that related to hip-hop culture, enables not just a common reference point for discussion, but also a specific language for the students to communicate with each other: a language that changes according to developments within media culture and, to some extent, geographic location. The following student describes a visit to the US, where he found that meaning was communicated using different slang, and with that change of location came a redefintion of argot as "normal English.":

> Student: *Like they use words like "Off the hook."*
> J: *What does that mean?*
> Student: *That means like "that's cool" or that's "Cronk."*
> J: *"Cronk?" What does that mean?*
> Student: *That's "cool" too, but referring to like shoes "those are cronk." Or then they'd be like "that's tight." That's like the same thing as "Cronk." They say like "mug" um, "thos mugs are tight," and they'd be talking about shoes. They'd be talking about rims on cars. They call them "roaches." Like "give me some "roaches." They use all kinds of different words.*

At times, hip-hop-enhanced argot was inflected according to national formation. Thus "batty boy," a phrase used in Jamaica to describe homosexuals, was understood and occasionally used by black students whose heritages were in North America or continental Africa. In response to a query from me as to the use of "batty man," the following student indicated:

> Student: *Here? //Yeah// They say batty boy a lot. //Oh batty boy?// Batty men, batty riders, batty everything.*
> J: *Oh that's interesting. And they use it, and then because it's used, you then pick it up?*
> Student: *Yeah. You start then understanding what it is or like, "Hey what's that mean?"*
> J: *So do you ever use it?*
> Student: *No. I've said batty boy before, but I really don't. Actually I am like laughing, mimicking it or something. I don't really be meaning it when I be saying it, 'cuz I really don't know how to use that word in a phrase. (individual interview)*

By communicating in the public sphere students are, to some extent, fixing the codes between linguistic and conceptual systems (Hall, 1997, p. 22). The incidental use and reference to youth culture and media to contextualize, and give meaning to, and understanding of, can be found in the ways in which the students' everyday narratives draw on youth culture to broaden their understanding. For example, describing someone "preppy" as being like "Carleton off of Fresh Prince" enables "anchoring" of meaning, even if temporary:

> **Student**: *Whitewashed I've heard, but never towards me. There was one kid that went here, everyone called whitewashed. He wore the perfect fit jeans, like the not baggy and not tight. They were just, sit on him you know. And he wore like the fancy dress shirts and the snatties[?] kind of like those guys you see on TV that go "Buffet." Like Carlton off of Fresh Prince. He was kind of like that. He was like one of the only ones that ever was called whitewashed.*

One example of the ways that gender relations are played out in the lives and culture of the students was through the phrase "being a player." The term, derived from films and music, symbolises one potential set of gender relations. Although they are often new words, they have roots within other eras of popular culture. One student argues that "playa" was a replacement for "mack." The words change but the meaning doesn't fully change; it becomes recoded through discourses that are dominant during that particular period of youth culture. Among the students "playa" is related not just to the conduct of gender relations, but is also linked via the issue of commodification to Puff Daddy and his public display of his wealth and women. Some male students traced the origins of the term to the US, indicating its constructed nature by alluding to the existence of rules and taboos in playing the game. In the narrative directly below, one rule that reinforces patriarchal relations is clearly articulated in the phrase " bros befo' hoes." Further, the following focus group indicates the way in which gender relations get played out through the symbolic coding of the phrase "playa":

> **Student 1**: *It's like a game.*
> **Student 2**: *It's like what kind of mind games you could play with them. If you can go out with two girls at the same time so that you can play them.*
> **J**: *Where does it come from?*
> **Student 3**: *I think some movie.*
> **Student 4**: *So people just use it.*
> **J**: *Do you know any girls who are players?*
> **Student 1**: *A girl can't be a player. If it's a girl, it's a slut. A girl, she ain't going to admit it.*
> **J**: *Its similar?*
> **Student 3**: *It's the same thing, it's not similar. Everything a black man does, he tries to make it look good. A drug dealer calls himself a gangsta. A pimp don't say he is a pimp. They say, "I am a big boy."*

Student 2: *I'm not. I ain't no player.*
J: *If you discovered that someone was playing your friend, what would you do?*
Student 1: *"Bro's before hoes."*
J: *Even if you know her since kindergarten?*
Student: *If she was playing around, I'd stun her! (male focus group)*

This use of media to enhance talk within the public sphere is not just applicable to black youths and hip-hop. Similar use of the media as a means of communicating was made by youths in Marie Gillespie's (1995) study of Punjabies in London. She notes that such meshing of the televisual media and everyday language provides "one of the most tangible examples of the way that the discourses of TV and everyday life are intermeshed is when jingles, catch phrases and humorous storylines of favourite ads are incorporated into everyday speech" (p. 178).

Although not obvious, reception and appropriation of media language–the process of making one's own something that is new–was often filtered through discourses of blackness. These discourses come into being in the public sphere. The students' narratives indicate that reception is filtered through and in relation to what can best be identified as an existing Black Nationalist discourse. Stokely Carmichael (1967), as one of the leaders of the Black Power/consciousness movement, and Charles Hamilton indicate that:

> . . . we aim to define and encourage a new consciousness among black people which will make it possible to proceed towards those answers and those solutions. This consciousness . . . might be called a sense of peoplehood: pride, rather than shame, in blackness and an attitude of brotherly communal responsibility among black people for one another. (p. 12)

A sense of a consciousness of pride rather than shame is used by some of students to position themselves and others as consciously black or not. This filtering is most evident in the narratives concerning the urban legend linking Tommy Hilfiger with the commodification of hip-hop style. It has occurred in an era conducive to mass designer fashion. Hilfiger can be seen as an extreme case of how the idea of mass designer fashion operates:

> Mass designer fashion is a specific formation within the industry; it is not equivalent to traditional haute couture (which is often dependant upon highly-skilled artisanal means of production and which is still somewhat outside the circuits of globalizing capital that nurtures the mass clothing industry). (Smith, 1999, p. 3)

Mass designer fashion illustrates the present-day concern with image/style rather than just the production of a consumer item. At times, concern with style collides with concern about consumption, as in chapter eight and nine where students discuss the ideological implication of wearing Hilfiger clothes. In the latter example, mass consumption collides with issues of black entrepreneurship.

The discussion on Tommy Hilfiger indicates the ways in which consumption becomes implicated in issues of ideology: meaning in the name of power. This equation of blackness with consumption of brand name and, more specifically Hilfiger, style is often accomplished through representations of style in magazines and music videos. Paul Smith (1998) indicates that:

> Having been frequently donated Hilfiger outfits for use in performances and, more importantly, in their music videos, rappers have functioned as conduits of approval and authorisation–authenticity, perhaps–for this white business attempting to sell what are essentially white styles to black consumers. (Smith, p. 6)

Smith, in analysing the anti-Hilfiger internet sites, argues that "the most common strand of objection to Hilfiger . . . appears to be a an objection to the very principle of black patronage of white business" (Smith, 1999, p. 7). This similar coding of the Hilfiger debate in the US internet sites illustrates the ways in which constructions of the meaning of blackness becomes local/global. While internet and word of mouth affect formation of discourse, music also acts as a means of conveying meanings of the Hilfiger urban legend. Hilfiger's mass designer fashions can also be seen as a way towards regulation of subcultural identities in the north, as they market and contour the tastes and desires of this group of youths. In the following narrative, the student illustrates how rap musicians also plays a role in constructing the discourse on Tommy Hilfiger, while linking the debate to discourses of black entrepreneurship:

> Student: *He talks about everything, black people, his one song, "Black and White." He says, "Why is Tommy Hilfiger discriminating on us? But I understand it because black people don't buy black-owned clothes. Then he goes off and he talks bout how they killed Martin Luther King and all kinds of stuff like that.*

Youth culture is based on patterns of consumption through which certain identities are projected. It is evident from the narratives that the students are engaged in a process of production as well as consumption. In terms of Hilfiger, Smith 1998 argues that:

> Similarly when black kids wear TOM logo as signs not just of fashionability but even of racial authenticity, they are doing more than just establishing a cultural identity and communality; equally, they are placing themselves in a particular relation to political-economic circuits for which the possibility of their consuming in this way is one of capital's central desiderata, or even imperatives, at this juncture when capital is dreaming of globalizing itself. (Smith, p. 7)

Stylish Solidarity

While the above narrative suggests that youth culture provides a language through slang and slurs, the students also access discourses that offer a critique of the commodification of rap/hip-hop and youth style. Thompson (1990) argues that symbolic forms constituted as commodities "can be bought and sold on a market for a price." Further, he argues that often this process assigns different degrees of symbolic value by those who produce them or receive them. In this way, he argues, conflict of symbolic valuation can occur according to context and social asymmetries. Linked to commodification is the way in which, for some of the students, style has become a sense of black solidarity. What Paul Gilroy (2000) identifies as stylish solidarity:

> Blackness emerges as more behavioral dare I say cultural? It can be announced by indicative sexual habits and other bodily gestures. Under some circumstances it can even be acquired in simple economic processes. Identity as sameness is and solidarity is definitely not being essentialized here. Items can be purchased that lend an eloquent uniformity to the mute body on a temporary, accidental basis. This is not an internal journey after all but a journey to the mall. (p. 268)

One of the most consistent discourses that can be traced in the public sphere occupied by the students concerns commercialization and commodification of black youth culture. Youth culture, as indicated earlier, has become in some ways synonymous with hip-hop culture and black youth culture. As such, regimes of representations, via magazines and music videos, have constructed the body as the centre of hip-hop discourses via an all-important emphasis on how the body is positioned and decorated. In accounting for this emphasis on the body, Armond White, (1995) the rap critic, argues that "since whites can't cut it vocally in hip-hop, where the texture of African American speech is as musical an element as the samples, the visual image is all important." Canadian cultural theorist Rinaldo

Walcott (1997) intimates that this emphasis on blackness has been ongoing rather than just related to white consumption of hip-hop:

> . . . culturally, black youth have demonstrated a real concern with the body and its performance. Their use of the body echoes the various ways in which black cultural practices have always treated bodies as a canvas upon which historical and contemporary social relations may be signified, inscribed and rewritten. (p. 64)

Whatever the dynamics of this specific phenomenon, it nonetheless draws on other discourses within society that privilege the body as a site of theoretical focus as well as a site of control (Foucault, 1982). Chris Weedon (1987) argues that:

> . . . discourses are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations, which inhere in such knowledges, and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the "nature" of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern. (p. 108)

Throughout the data chapters, a variety of contesting discourses are evident in the students' narratives. These discourses are constructed through descriptors such as "authentic" rap music vs. mainstream rap music: old-school vs. new-school rap; *laissez-faire* consumption vs. black-identified consumption. That these discourses should be competing is not surprising if one notes Easthope and McGowan's (1992) comment that "within any given social and historical moment a variety of discourses exist and compete for control of subjectivity. The subject thus becomes the site of a discursive battle for the meaning of their identity" (p. 69). The way that the students have on offer a variety of ways in which to understand and give meaning to the production and consumption of youth culture is evident within the narratives. Critical theorists such as Adorno, from the Frankfurt School, assume that the role of "culture industries" is to keep the masses ignorant so that they do not recognise their "true" economic conditions of oppression. However, the students indicate an awareness of a situation that is neither simple nor clear-cut. These students they are aware, as black youths, that black-identified cultural forms such as rap have been commodified and that in an earlier era of black consciousness, consumption of white products was perceived as undermining black economic activity.

The students are able to draw on these various discourses in order to contest an ideology of commodification (chapters five to nine). This ability of the students to contest discourses undermines any claims of passive consumption. Instead, the students' narratives position them as being both active and passive in their choices and consumption. So practices of consumption that the students engage in during everyday life seem to act back upon and thus come to shape, discourses, just as the discourses themselves shape practices. The ability of the students to use contesting and competing discourses cannot bring about immediate change, but it does offer a way to interrupt meaning that might lead to different consumption patterns. As to whether different patterns of consumption lead to social change or not is a debatable, if not problematic, question. Examples from other areas of social life indicate that using consumption patterns to bring about change has mixed results. While boycotting South African goods may have worked to some extent in the fight against apartheid, recycling has yet to make a difference to the depletion of the ozone layer. However, these students do develop a black consciousness, even if filtered through a youth culture based around issues of consumption. This consciousness, although not politicised at the moment, has the potential to be channelled into other avenues of social change. It also illustrates that as Gramsci argues, it is on the level of culture that ideology is often fought. It can be suggested that:

> . . . in the light of receiving media messages and seeking to understand them, of relating them and sharing them with others, individuals remould the boundaries of experience and reuse their understandings of the world and themselves. They are not passively absorbing what is presented to them, but are actively, sometimes critically, engaged in a continuing process of self-formation and self-understanding, a process of which the reception and appropriation of media messages is today an integral part. (Thompson, 1991, p. 10)

However, it should also be noted that while some students drew on discourses that linked a sense of consciousness with support for black-owned businesses, such actions were articulated within a framework of capitalism. Using an argument that fits within a framework of relations of representation, it is assumed that changes can be brought about for blacks if they, too, are allowed into the "free market" of capitalism. In actuality, the issues surrounding blackness in the US will not be changed solely by a support for black capitalism, since issues of economic distribution will still be evident within the uneven and unequal development of capitalism.

This process of "self-formation and self-understanding" identified by Thompson is most evident in the narratives concerning the conscious support of black community control of capital through specific patterns of consumption. In such consumption, some students draw on existing black nationalist/consciousness discourses supportive of black community self-sufficiency to position themselves as consciously black. In positioning themselves in relation to the Tommy Hilfiger urban legend and in relation to Puff Daddy's genre of "new school" music, the students say something about themselves and their identification as black.

This process of identification via dress style has become heightened in an age when the body has become paramount:

> J: *So your job will be [in the media] // Yeah // So what about your style of dress then? Do you see yourself still wearing the same stuff when you are [working at the media]?*
> Student: *Oh no, no. I'd be dressed up in the sweetest suits, wicked suits. I'd just be lounging there in my suits, man. And then my hair wouldn't be like it is. I'm planning on shaving my hair low sometime. Like even maintaining a nice appearance.*

It is evident that there is no one style of dress to which all students adhere. As with musical choices, the media personalities that they identify with vary from the "smooth" of Will Smith through Puff Daddy to the "rough" of Method Man. It is this coming together of cultural icons and musicians with consumption of style that heightens the nature of commodification that is underway in this process (refer to chapters six and seven). The body image gives a certain potency to identifications that are made, and therefore identification should be regarded as a "cut of identity" that is momentary, and based on a process of "becoming" as well as "being." This reliance on style and body as representative of blackness, what Gilroy identifies as "stylish solidarity," is an important discourse in the lives of the students. For the males interviewed in the focus group, athletic ability was perceived as both a positive aspect of blackness and an object of female desire.[2] Such an understanding bears the historical trace of viewing black males in terms of body and physicality rather than the mind and intellect. In this context, the phrase "acting black" connotes both stylish solidarity and physicality. This phrase is polysemic–being capable of signifying multiple meanings–and describes the assumption of a media-generated black identity that includes dress, walk and talk. This specific black youth identity has, through mediazation, become coded as authentic blackness. It also allows black males to continue to be regarded ambivalently by their white peers with desire and fear. However, for some of the students, the ability to define such identification as "acting," positions the descriptor as an important signifier that gives recognition to heterogeneity of black identity. The latter also allows for the possibility of developing a way of being black within Canadian society that could be different from, yet related to, the US. The use of the phrase, "acting black" questions the dominance of US-generated images of blackness as universal, and problematizes the representations of such identities. While such a problematization might not lead to direct change, it does provide a breaking of the binary between blackness as colour and blackness as "image." It allows for the emergence of questions such as what is **not** "acting black?" i.e., a debate on the meaning of blackness across geographic locations.

Although hip-hop culture is identified primarily with blackness, with commodification it has come to be seen by some cultural theorists as a "multicultural" style that many whites have accepted and adopted. As one student described the social interaction at school:

> Student: *Yeah, everybody tries to act black around here.*
> J: *Really!*
> Student: *Even a white guy in the hall. "Wha's up?" Not "what's up" or "how you are doing." To act black is to be cool. And that's a big part in this country, at least in this community. And we know it [he laughs].*

Some critics regard this ready adoption of black-identified style as an indication of the growing tolerance of hip-hop nation and blackness. However, the ability of nonblacks to "act black" through dress and style is seen as problematic by some black students, and indicative of a psychological lack with their white peers. Such an analysis is similar to that of cultural critics, such as bell hooks (1994) and Yvonne Bynoe (July, 2000). Bynoe is sceptical of the ability of hip-hop to transcend racialised experiences. She regards the lure of rap for a white audience as similar to that of Norman Mailer's 1957 construction of a "white Negro" who "drifted out at night looking for action with a black man's code to fit their facts." She thus argues that:

> For whites brought up in suburbia or in affluent, homogenous urban neighbourhoods, the biggest, nastiest, lustiest, most uninhibited edge they can find in their nearly all-white experience is dressing "black," talking "black," and walking "black;" even as their "black" is a distorted MTV version. (Bynoe, July, 2000)

So it would seem that while hip-hop offers a social space for dialogue on blackness, it is a dialogue that is mediated through stereotypes of that blackness.

Issues concerning stylish solidarity and commodification, like those of the above discussion of "acting black," bring into question the role of ideology in relation to agency and structure. Are the cultural industries determining the students consumption and consequent identification that they make through those consumption patterns? Research on audiences and their reception in general of media lies at the heart of much cultural studies discussion and is linked to the concept of ideology. As indicated in chapter one, "ideology can be conceived of as one of the ways in which the meanings mobilised by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination" (Thompson, 1990). This interpretation of ideology differs from those theorists who would position themselves as on the political economy wing of social theory. Turner, in an admittedly simplistic tone, identifies this difference in orientation to ideology as one whereby, for political economist, the "function of ideology is instrumental–to misrepresent the 'real,' and to mask any political struggle; for cultural studies, ideology is the very site of struggle." In contrast, Adorno, as discussed in chapter one, identifies the purpose of the culture industry as to impose dominant relations upon the working class. However, I support McRobbie's (1994) call to move from a binary whereby political economists, as indicted in Turner's comment above, are posed as in clear opposition to cultural populism. Instead, she advocates a return to neo-Gramsci theory. Use of such a framework would allow recognition of the:

> dialectic between the processes of production and activities of consumption. The consumer always confronts a text or practice in its material existence as a result of determinate conditions of production. But in the same way, the text or practice is confronted by a consumer who in effect produces in use the range of possible meaning(s), which cannot just be read off from the materiality of the text or practice, or the means or relations of its production. (Storey, 1996, p. 5)

Thus discourses of blackness as political consciousness emerge through much of the students' narratives. "Keeping it real" and "keeping it true" are the phrases that identify this discourse. Thus "keeping it real" is used to identify one with one's social background and one's "roots." In the case of hip-hop, "roots" are identified closely with one's neighbourhood. This linking back to "the hood" is reinforced by various codes within music videos that position rappers as tied to, or linked with, the neighbourhood they grew up in. Contesting and competing with this discourse of "keeping it real" is another discourse that constructs rap as primarily a product for sale to the larger non-black public. For some of the students, this positioning of rap as commercial is aligned with rapper Puff Daddy, who, as the section on rap as commodity (in chapters six and seven) indicate, is perceived as having very few rhymes, using recycled beats and rapping only about his money and women. The latter descriptor of Puff Daddy exemplifies a person that is seen as opposite to and different from someone who is "keeping it real." As well, constructions of "keeping real" are also based on being able to draw on one's concrete experiences of living in the hood. What is interesting about the latter constructions is that although commodification of black experiences are contested through a discourse of commercialism, these same students are colluding with commercial enterprises whereby the experiences that are on sale through "keeping it real" are representations of poverty. In some ways "keeping it real" rap sells the experiences of the poor so that individuals can become economically advantaged and thus leave the "hood." It is, in some ways, as Doreen identifies (in chapter nine), an indication of rappers "making it." But at the same time it is an individual success - the rest of the brothers are back in the hood. There was no discussion within students narratives of the responsibility of rappers to plough back money into the community, whose experiences they are selling.

Stylish solidarity becomes linked to issues of black authenticity and representation through the persona of various rappers. The ability of rappers to take on the role of "authentic black," knowledgeable in black experiences, has increased with the commodification of rap and its ability to represent itself as the universal in black experiences rather than the particular. This coding of rappers as "knowledgeable" as "telling it like it is" has enabled them to be coded as "authorities on life in the "hood." This linking can be seen in the much- used descriptor "raptivist," i.e. an activist rapper. In the US the importance of the raptivist has grown in a period when, relationally, other political activists have become muted within the media. For some youths, the rappers have become coded as equivalent to past social activists. Nelson George (1998) would disagree with the latter. For him, hip-hop is not a political movement in the usual sense. The advocates don't elect public officials. It doesn't present a systematic (or even original) critique of white supremacy (p. 154). Within Canada, this discourse is constructed through a lens filtered by national formation, since rappers, Canadian or US, are not represented through media as embodying authentic African-Canadian experiences. They cannot come to represent the universal in black experiences. Thus, they cannot speak on behalf of the black population in Canada.

Also significant in the latter scenario is the way that "keeping it real" is an important aspect of maintaining a sense of legitimacy. However, this legitimacy involves more of a sense of memory rather than any specific action to be undertaken. It bifurcates thought and action, body and mind. As well, in an almost parasitic relationship, the rappers are dependent upon the lived experiences of poverty and violence in the hood in order to define themselves and escape that world. These competing discourses around rap within the student group interviewed are also, not surprisingly, to be found in magazines read by many of the students. Thus Max Glazer (1998) in *The Source* indicates not just the rationale of commodification but also the longevity:

> Ever since the corporate forces got their hands on this Bronx, NY-based rap music thing, artists, fans and the industry alike (especially those residing in the East Coast) have struggled to define what's' beneficial to hip-hop culture and what's detrimental. (p. 152)

What is surprising however, is the contradictory nature of the latter whereby magazines that are a part of that commodification process should espouse such critique. This critique of commodification finds an alignment with earlier discourses drawing on the 1960s Carmichael and Hamilton's (1997) definition of black power and the need for not only pride and consciousness in order to perform blackness but also self-determination:

> Black people must lead and run their own organisations. Only black people can convey the revolutionary idea–and it is a revolutionary idea–that black people are able to do things themselves. Only they can create in the community an aroused and continuing black consciousness that will provide the basis for political strength. (p. 60)

Through these competing discourses and discursive practices, the students can align themselves with subject positions such as "black" or "not black enough." Although not clearly evident among the students as yet, these discourses on blackness are getting played out through the consumption of styles. Several narratives in chapter eight noted the ways in which some students are moving away from the "traditional" baggier styles of hip-hop towards the more fitted preppy look. Nelson George (1998) also notes the link between preppy clothing and more recent hip-hop-derived style. In particular, he argues that:

> Hilfiger found that the kids wanted his logo larger, more plentiful and more colorful. Hilfiger accommodated them and this evolving style became known in the fashion biz as "urban prep," a way of dressing that took prep-school clothes and stretched them to fit the loose, baggy feel of '90s teen garb. (p. 162)

This recoding of blacks as dressing preppy is interesting in light of the binarism that also exists within some students' narratives on dressing "preppy." As with the descriptor "alternative," students often coded preppy connotatively with whiteness and opposite to existing understandings of what a black identity means (Kelly, 1998). This may well be the next site of constestation. Will those who adopt the "preppy" style be coded as "white-wanna- be's?" Coded within this discourse on style is the contouring of space, where the Northside is positioned as dressing in the more traditional "authentic" black style, while the Southside will be constructed as dressing like "pretty boy" Puff Daddy.

Thus, to reinforce the main point of this chapter, although the students are influenced by African American styles, it is not a passive reception but often involves appropriation filtered through wider societal discourses on blackness and the ability to define a certain field of empirical truth. It is noticeable, and important, in terms of black collectivity, the way that black identity has become embodied as stylish solidarity among youths rather than political consciousness as in earlier eras of black consciousness/ nationalists such as espoused by Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, or Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture).

Knowledge and Experience

As stated in the last sections on slang and slurs and stylish solidarity, discourses are produced and reproduced within a public sphere. This next section highlights again the phrase "keeping it real" to indicate its intertextual nature–its ability to evoke meanings through being read in relation to other media and knowledge sites such as schools. As well, this section highlights how the relationship between knowledge and experiences gets coded through the phrase "keeping it real." This phrase can be viewed as homological in that it reveals the relationship between the particular cultural choices of the group of students and how these choices are used to construct the social meaning of the group. Such appropriation is enabled and worked through within the public sphere of the everyday, in schools, workplaces and homes.

"Keeping it real" returns again as a phrase that crosses over from the realm of rap music and is brought into use in order to legitimate violent representations in films such as *Boyz N the Hood,* wherein the use of violence legitimates the film as realistic. In particular, this coding of social relations as "reality" allows the emergence of representations that under other circumstances would be challenged. An example of the latter is seen in the students' view that *The Jerry Springer Show* provides a public language that is similar to that constructed through youth culture. The following student narrative indicates the way in which the program is used as a resource for bringing gendered relations into the public sphere:

> Student: *At school all the time people talk about Jerry Springer:*
> J: *Do they? //yeah// What do they say?*
> Student: *"Did you see Springer yesterday?" "Did you see them beat that girl?" or "clap that girl," stuff like that.*

It is a realism to which students relate, and are interpellated even though viewing the show is sometimes a guilty pleasure:

> Student: *Okay. Jerry, I must admit I am ashamed to honestly say so. Sometimes I do watch it. I t's a really bad show. He is like totally demoralized. But I can't help it. It's like kind of* addictive *sometimes. People are so stupid. But it's funny,*

> *it's really funny. Because, well maybe some of them are faking it, but you can tell that some of them are not faking it. And they are so dumb.*

The strong confessional mode of the programme is seen as offering an insight into the "real world" and ways in which gender dynamics are often problematic in everyday life. Jerry Springer himself argues that the show is not scripted:

> I want the show to be real. I think it is much more effective, entertaining, and compelling if the viewer is sitting at home watching and going, "Wow, these folks are real. It's amazing!" If it's fake, then we might as well do a soap opera where everyone's a good actor and they're all drop dead gorgeous. (Springer & Morton 1998, p. 106)

Jerry Springer's allusion to soap operas relative to his own show is evident in the comments of a student who sees reality as problematic rather than smooth. For the following student, soap operas and sitcoms are based on real situations. But the way that the actors behave within those TV-constructed formats is often "unproblematic" and therefore not "real."

> Student: *The only one I can handle is maybe like Family Matters. That's only 'cuz Steve Erekle–my mum likes him. She thinks he is funny. That's like the only thing. I find them too fake. Like they put out real situations. Like I understand. But they don't do things that actual people would do. Like times when they say "Oh geez" it would be "Oh shit" you know. And it's like Uum (pause); No. . . .*
> J: *So that's how you think they would make it real by using language. What other ways would make it more real for you?*
> Student: *People don't. They don't react the same way as* ***normal people*** *would. Like one time I was watching Family Matters. And Laura got a gun pulled on her and her jacket taken away by three of the biggest bullies in school. Like someone is going to stand there and say. " No I am not giving you my jacket."*
> J: *So they wouldn't talk about it you don't think? // No! // So where does your understanding of that come from then?*
> Student: *Just from my (pause) past experiences, people who I have talked to before. Umm like being a bully myself.*

As well, the student normalises this construction of social reality in order to legitimate her own position as acceptable.

In general, the students' reception of the *Jerry Springer* program is akin to Ien Ang's conception of three possible subject positions in relation to reception of the TV soap *Dallas*. For Ang (1985), these subject positions consisted of fans, ironical viewers, and those who strongly dislike the program. Produced in relation to and through a discourse on the "ideology of mass culture," the students show a similar positioning. However, instead of the ideology of mass culture as the referent point against which their views were measured, the students used a discourse of "reality." Some students positioned themselves as akin to Ang's conception of "ironical viewers." For such students, *Springer* is a comedy to be laughed at–"pleasure without guilt," whereas to be a fan, to like the program without irony, is to be positioned as duped. The origin of these types of "reality programs" has been attributed to a variety of sources, including the MTV *Real World* program in the 1970's. Armond White (1995), in discussing the *Real World*, suggests that the original *Real World* gimmick is based on the 1973 public television series:

> "An American Family"–a continuing series that peeked in on a white middle-class American home. Shot on film rather than video, "An American Family" offered documentary drama revealing the parent's marital breakdown, a son's admitted homosexuality. As if countering the sitcom mythological view of American domestic life, "An American Family" depended on the shock of real life and unscripted behaviour but it was a smug TV coup. Cinema verite technique was used without admitting the degree of intervention by the video crew.
> (White, p. 395)

With regard to television, discourses of the "real" and the "not real" are deployed in order to construct specific meanings from the plethora of "reality programmes" that invade the students' everyday lives. It is not just *Jerry Springer* that operates through this code of reality–other TV programs such as the hit shows of 2000 *Survivor*, and *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* are constructed through similar codings. This justification of the outlandish in the name of reality and its challenge of what is socially acceptable within the public sphere and in society is also evident in discussions above into the use of misogynist language in hardcore and gangsta rap. This point is reinforced by Ernest Allen Jr.'s (1996) comment that, "gangster rappers tend to assert that what they describe is 'like it is' claiming that they are simply articulating attitudes as they exist within African American communities" (p. 189). Yvonne Bynoe, in challenging rappers' use of "telling it like it is," argues that:

> . . . at this point in time, rap music and Hip hop culture has become corporate entertainment, whereby many Black rap artists get paid not for speaking their individual truth but for performing the roles of "gangsta," "pimp" and "ho" for the enjoyment of white audiences. (p. 3)

Bynoe's comment highlights the tension and relations of dominance within the relationship between the performer and audience, and further alludes to an element of voyeurism that places whites as subjects and black rappers as objects to be consumed.

In terms of gender relations, it is interesting that in the film *Set it Off*, which challenges the hyper-masculinity of the "hood films," it is its lack of realism that is presented as a factor in not accepting it as plausible. Bearing in mind gender relations and dominance in society, Daniel Chandler (1998) advocates caution in trying to identify social realism. For him:

> . . . what counts as "realistic" modes of representation are both historically and culturally variable. The depiction of "reality" even in iconic signs involves variable codes, which have to be learned, yet which with experience, come to be taken-for-granted as transparent and obvious. (p. 1)

Set it Off also provided an opportunity for taboo subjects such as sexuality to come into the public sphere and to be talked about. The issue of lesbianism within the film is a taboo for some students. For many of the students, identification with a religious/ moral subject position contests any representation of lesbians as acceptable. Other forms of youth culture, such as reggae and rap, also reinforce these religious discourses in positioning heterosexuality as the norm. Thus the understanding of realism that the students use is a commonsense one. O'Sullivan et al., suggests that "often [it] refers merely to the extent to which representational details resemble or concur with the knowledge of the object (which may be an emotion, theme or ideas as well as a thing) that we have already" (O'Sullivan et al., 1994, p. 257). Often the theme of realism operates intertextually as it weaves within and between the narratives concerning films, television programs, music and identity in an attempt to locate differing media texts as "real" or "not real." It is interesting that the real is so important in an age when one encounters so many experiences that can no longer be validated and coded in traditional ways of defining reality. The construction of blackness that takes place through regimes of representations is based upon specific forms of masculinity that subsume and deny the experiences of women or gays. In undermining this coding of black masculinity with violence, bell hooks (1996) argues that hood films such as *Menace II Society* "offers ithemselves to us as "black culture." Yet what the film actually interrogates within its own narrative in reference to the film's characters is that "these black boys have learned how to do this shit not from black culture but from watching white gangster movies." She continues:

> the film points out that the whole myth of the gangster–as it is being played out in rap and in movies–is not some Afrocentric or black-defined myth, it is the public myth that's in our imaginations from movies and television. (p. 116)

At times, linking of gangster movies with gansta rappers is evident. For the following student, this association between gangster rap and white gangster movie was not lost:

> Student: *One thing, rappers are entertainers, just like you watch a movie, gangsta rap is like a story, say someone like Nas Foxy and JZ it's called The Forum [?], and on the album it's all about drug deal and killing. But one thing you notice, every song is a story. They don't do that in real life. It's a story of how they beat the cops. They don't do that in real life. It's just entertaining. It's like going out to watch Johnny Brasco. (focus group, males)*

This section has described the ways in which definitions of the real are of importance in reception of media and in making meaning in everyday life.

Having examined the way in which the construction and identification of reality have enabled relations of domination to be maintained, we can look more directly at how this construction of reality affects understandings of school. As indicated above, the students access not just pleasure, but also develop knowledge and understandings through hip-hop and youth culture. These forms of knowledge and understandings are often placed in relation to school-legitimated knowledge to give a sense of meaning to their school lives.

Using the phrase "keeping it real," as a starting point of analysis, it is evident that some students, especially males, place school knowledge in a binary to everyday knowledge garnered through direct experiences. The importance of the latter is to be found in the comment that "the quality of discourse about schooling is contingent upon how schooling is understood, the ways in which the multifarious meanings schooling has for diverse people are formed and modified over time" (p. 7).

During the discussion, the students positioned themselves as having knowledge garnered through everyday experiences, a knowledge they argued, that was viewed as illegitimate when placed in relation to school-legitimated knowledge. In the following narrative, the students illustrate how they place learning through experiences in relation to school knowledge:

> Student 1: *I saw this guy [on TV] and this guy was supposed to be the biggest drug dealer in Washington who was in jail, and this was someone who hasn't been to high school. And the way this guy talked, he blew me away, he was brilliant.*
> Student 2: *People who are harassed most by the cops on a daily basis, they begin to know how things work for themselves and how to get around certain questions.*

> Student 3: *It's like TuPac. Most people who went to Harvard will be like blah blah, I can write this, and Tupac knows [how to write poetry].*

The students transfer this discourse of the "real" and learning through experience to the school site in order to construct an understanding of the purpose of schooling and their place within it. For some of the students, particularly males in the focus group, school knowledge was positioned as binary opposite to knowledge gained through experiences. They see a split between emotional and rational; experience and books; real and abstract; and life and school. The ability to construct such binarism allows these males to position school learning as "other" with regard to their lives and to developing an understanding of self.

It is not only the students who represent school knowledge in this way. Parelius & Parelius (1987) argue that "only in recent years has the gap between knowledge and daily life been so great that young people see no relevance in the material they learn at school" (p. 60). This mediation of reception of school activities through constructions of rap-generated reality is also evident in what the students read. Autobiography and biographies were popular among the students who indicated that they read very few books unless requested to do so for a class assignment:

> J: *So what would you choose to read?*
> *Student 1: I don't read as much as the next person. Biographies, Jimmy Hendrix or Malcom X.*
> J: *How come?*
> Student 2: *Because they made a change.*
> Student 3: *I like young adult, some adventures. Well I am still reading this book about Martin Luther King Jr.*

It is also noticeable how the biographies and autobiographies mentioned concerned the lives of African Americans. This may well indicate that the students have a level of racialized consciousness not always apparent within other areas of their narratives.

The response to school was to some extent gendered, and the young women, while not expressing the same degree of alienation between the curriculum and life experiences, nonetheless coded their perceptions of pedagogy in a similar vein. They attributed their boredom to teacher style and pedagogy as much as the actual curriculum. For them, teachers, who were bored themselves, laid back, or just waiting to retire, often made no attempt to engage the students. Interestingly, the students identified as "fun," one teacher who was interested in the ways in which the student's lives outside school intersected with their identification as students. As the focus group described this "fun" teacher:

Student 1: *He always answers your question–he makes it fun.*
Student 2: *He gives you all the information, stuff like that.*
Student 1: *He knows how it is to be a student. He relates to us. He'll say, "I know you guys are going to be bored doing this. Let's take a break point."*
Student 2: *We wanted to know about the teachers' strike. Some teachers are like "Its none of your business." But it affects us all. And he knows that, so that's why.*
Student 1: *He tells us everything.* (focus group, girls)

In line with issues of individual freedom, contoured through relations of power between adult and youths, some students also see knowledge as imposed– just words, with no transmission of emotions. By constructing school knowledge as denuded of emotions and actions, these students can then suggest that little is learned about the self. While one can argue that the students' narratives are constructions and part of a wider discourse used by many students to indicate a sense of alienation, nonetheless discourses do have material effects. The latter reveals that the students use understandings and meanings acquired in one area of life to translate and give meaning to another area of life. Thus understandings of what is "real" are affected by the dominance of discourses constructed through popular cultural that comes to affect perceptions of how school knowledge is generated. For some males, binarism comes into play, as message rap is coded as allowing one to learn about the self, while the official curriculum is constructed as "doesn't let you learn about yourself." The latter construction of binaries with regard to learning is related not just to pedagogy but also to desire. In particular, we can note Peter McLaren's (1994) comment that experience is an understanding derived from specific interpretation of a certain "engagement with the world of symbols social practices, and cultural forms" (p. 332). Both music and dress style involve a placing of the self within reception and consequent production of meaning, which is not always evident in the transmission of the official curriculum, as described by the students. Thus the curriculum as a form of representation is seen as distant, lifeless, predictable, not really what the "real" world is about. So one can postulate that if the student constructs school knowledge as not having much to offer in terms of understanding the self, then this might well affect students' levels of motivation.

In continuing with the theme of learning about the self through the curriculum, one can also posit the narratives of the students that construct the official curriculum as teaching little or nothing with regard to an understanding of a black or racialized self. It is an example of how, as Foucault (1980) indicates, "the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and conversely knowledge created power" (p. 52). Here the students construct this displacement of the black self from the curriculum as evidence of a relation of dominance constructed between black and white ,rather than one constructed between the relation adults and youths. This construction of the curriculum as racialized echoes the perspectives of other African-Canadian students in Brown & Kelly (2000). It is not just a matter of inclusion but also representation. Thus for one student blackness was included in the curriculum but coded negatively:

> Student: *Usually well for Social Studies. It consists basically of history and economics. With economics you do deal with the whole world. That's not so much on cultures. But most likely, if anything, when they make black people look bad. They'll go and talk bout Third World countries so they'll go "Oh the Caribbean, and Africa and Indian whatever." So that's the only view that people get. That's what I mean to say. So that's all. So there is no whole story. I suppose that like real, real African history you would have to go back really, really far*

The argument used by the students is one based upon what Stuart Hall (1996a) might identify as "relations of representations" as much as exclusion. As Hall explains this process, it is "the contestation of the marginality, the stereotypical quality, and the fetishized nature of images of blacks, by the counterposition of a 'positive' imagery" (p. 164).

As with the black youth culture that the students encounter, the school-legitimated knowledge also centres blackness within the US or Africa. There is little or no reference to any sense of blackness within the Canadian mosaic, resulting in a reinforcing of the sense of borrowed blackness discussed above. One student, whose ancestry is in Canada, articulates how she found out and responded to being part of a historical black presence in Alberta[3]:

> Student: *I like it, it's neat. Like it's kind of like when I found out that there is like a whole bunch of settlements, black settlements in like Amber Valley and all that. I was like "Whoa that's pretty, . . ." 'Cuz you don't usually hear about that. You either hear about the States and stuff, different, um, how black people were down there and stuff and of course Africa. But not in Canada [laugh].*
> J: *Do you think it would make a difference if more people knew that there has been a long presence?*
> Student: *I think people would find it interesting, 'cuz I did. I felt kind of proud. I was like "Yeah!" [proud] I think people would find it interesting because you hear about like way long time ago. You hear about the natives. And how white man came and take over but then also black people settled, perhaps not around that time. But little after but you just never heard about that.*

This need for acknowledgement is seen as not just for black students but also as something of which all students should be aware. Within a few of the narratives the students indicated that teaching about blackness is always represented as race-specific or ethnic-specific. The following student identifies how this coding of knowledge works:

> *I have not gone to one social class where we learn about black history. Once actually, in February in junior high. For English class I asked my teacher if we could do something on Black History Month. And the next day she came, we were doing a poetry unit, the next day she comes to school and gives me a whole bunch of suggestions on black poets that I could do my poetry assignment on. //Ah. // But she just gave it to me but I was like. I wanted the whole class to do it. I don't want to be [just] doing[it] myself. (student, individual interview)*

McCaskell (1995), indicates a similar point in a discussion of the "traditional" curriculum:

> The "greatness" of these works allows them to rise above their ethnic, racial or cultural specificity to deal with "human values" of equal relevance to everyone. Traditional curricula thereby attain the status of the universal, while the work of people of colour, for example, is locked into its ethnic, racial, or cultural curriculum. (p. 262)

So with this equation of the traditional curriculum as the norm, any attempt to request a change in reference point or emphasis is always read in relation to this constructed norm and is thus most likely to be constructed as outside the norm. As well, underlying the teacher's action is an assumption that knowledge and experiences of peoples of African descent is only appropriate for black students.

Again, the students view schools as reinforcing this sense of hegemonic blackness discussed above. Often the representations of blackness that are included within the school curriculum are heavily weighted towards African-American experiences. African-Canadian experiences are often negated, thus reinforcing the hegemonic dominance of African-American identity to that of African Canadian. This hegemonic process is identified by McLaren (1994) as one where "the dominant culture tries to "fix" the meaning of signs, symbols and representations to provide a "common" worldview, disguising relations of power and privilege through the organs of mass media and state apparatus such as schools, government institutions" (p. 183).

Chapter Summary

Using the themes of youth culture as a communicative resource, stylish solidarity, and education and experience, I examined how meanings and relations of dominance get produced and reproduced through students' talk. Youth culture provides a common language through which the students are able to create symbolic referents that can then be used in the representation of a variety of social relations based on race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion. Through this common language the students are able to construct a sense of blackness and also develop what Stanley Fish identifies as an "interpretative community." As part of accessing student talk, I also use focus group discussions. I draw on the focus group during this chapter in order to illustrate the ways in which discourses operate intersubjectively and to indicate the times they agree or disagree with each other or the interviewer. As indicated by the narratives and the work of Hall (1996), hooks (1990), and Diawara (1996), the meaning of blackness is never fixed. So these students make use of youth culture to develop symbolic codes, that when worked through existing discourses on gender, class, and religion, serve to both unify and fragment a sense of blackness. While some of the students have a political consciousness of being black, this consciousness is often in tension with discourses based on what Gilroy calls "stylish solidarity." "Keeping it real" is an important signifier in youth culture, and this phrase is used to code not just music reception but is also transferred to give meaning in other areas of their lives such as schooling. Overall analysis of the students does not subscribe fully to a cultural populist position where meaning and pleasure are everything, neither do they subscribe to a political economy that positions them as victims of reproduction. Reception of media often involves contestation as well as contradiction.

Thus, in this chapter, the students' narratives portray them as active rather than passive recipients of media culture. In many ways, meaning is manufactured out of systems of codes, conventions, and signs, rather than direct transmission. The findings do not support an "either" "or" process of meaning, whereby the students either subscribe fully to a thesis of cultural domination or to one that positions them as resisting the influence of media.

Notes

[1] Stokely Carmichael changed his name to Kwame Turu in honour of Kwame Nkrumah and Ahmed Sekou Toure.

2.This valuing of male physique is not confined to young black males but can be found among other groups of males. Sports jocks in North American high school culture are a valued commodity.

3. Selwyn Jacobs produced an interesting film *We Remember Amber Valley* in 1984. As well the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) film *Fields of Endless Days* examines, historically, the presence of Africans in Canada. Also Gwen Hooks' (1997) book *Keystone Legacy: Reflections of a Black Settler* discusses the development of the town of Keystone (Breton) in Alberta. Also worth examining for details of early black settlers in Alberta is the two volume series *The Windows of Our Memories* (1981) by Velma Carter and Wanda Leffler Alkili.

Chapter 12

Bringing it Back Home: Concluding

The study of culture . . . is an activity more akin to interpreting a text than to classifying flora and fauna. What it requires is not so much the attitude of the analyst seeking to classify and quantify, but rather the sensitivity of an interpreter seeking to discern patterns of meaning, to discriminate between shades of sense, and to render intelligible a way of life which is already meaningful for those who live it. (Thompson, 1990, p. 132)

Introduction

This concluding chapter recaps my findings on how the students make meaning and construct their identities through consumption of youth culture. The purpose of this chapter is to draw together some loose threads in terms of indicating– what this all means beyond the exposure of students' narratives, and of what the significance of this is in terms of theory and future research? In the previous eleven chapters, the emphasis has been on what the students have to say and my interpretation of their voices. Now I make one final attempt (within the bounds of this thesis) to be even bolder in terms of prescriptions, as well as trying to make sense of the data generated in relation to the research literature that has been evoked. For me, this final chapter is an attempt to link my voice to the research project, a process reinforced by use of the personal "I" rather than the more objective "one."

I also want to highlight ambivalence towards being prescriptive in terms of the findings generated in this research project. As a social theorist, I am a product of the historical period within which I am living and writing. This means that to a certain extent I am bound by the dominant theoretical discourses that exist within my field of enquiry and the academic institutions within which I have undertaken my work. Thus my work is a reflection of the dominance of poststructuralist discourse as a "regime of truth" (Foucault, 1980) within academia as much as the critical orientation with which I entered graduate school.

The thesis has indicated the importance of youth culture and mediazation in terms of how these fourteen students make identification with blackness and how they consequently come to understand their sense of self in the world. This understanding of self is heavily contoured by a specific historical conjuncture when black youth culture has become a viable economic commodity. Thus, issues of black identification consistently collide with youth culture in order to provide various symbolic codes through which these students give meaning to their experiences. Through what can be identified as discourses– through language, (verbal and non-verbal) regime of representations, and social interaction–the students make use of these space-distanciated media culture to develop a cultural formation. Such a formation, while specific to their the students' own social location, nonetheless reflects a globalised capitalist economy in terms of its consumerist orientations.

Throughout the thesis Williams' (1958/1993) advocation of "culture as a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group" rings true and enables a wider understanding of the every day than more static conceptualizations of culture. The findings indicate that knowledge of the "cultural" is useful in understanding how students make sense of school and schooling. "It is precisely on the terrain of culture that identities are produced, and values learned, histories legitimated, and knowledge appropriated" (Giroux, 1997, p. 59). In the following pages of this chapter I attempt a degree of reflexivity in terms of my research project, especially with regard to borrowed blackness, essentialism and identity, agency and structure, and future paths for this area of research.

Although not highlighted in chapter one, the students can be viewed as drawing on various discourses in their attempt to position themselves in relation to media. These discourses are socially shaped, but also socially shaping in terms of social identities, social relations, and systems of knowledge. These three latter aspects are evident in the ways in which the students construct discourses in a public sphere (Fairclough, 1995, p. 55). The students use media culture in a variety of ways to give meaning to their sense of identity. They draw on magazines, music, television programs, and films in order to develop an understanding of themselves in relation to their peers and to adults. These various sources of media culture provide resources through which various symbolic codes are constructed. In turn, these various codes enable the students to develop a common language through which they can discuss issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. This youth culture operates through and within discourses, those closely-bounded statements that already exist within society. During social interaction, the students seem to position themselves within and in relation to these youth-enhanced discourses and discursive practices to indicate specific identities and say something about themselves.

For the students, media become common sites for the blurring of the private and public spheres. In particular, the discourses through which the students position themselves become a means of "breaking the boundaries" between private and public space. This breaking of boundaries is akin to what Fairclough (1995) describes as "conversationalizing" discourses. In any analysis of social phenomena, context looms large and no less so in this instance wherein the division between the private and public sphere are in tension with each other.

Mediazation and Identity

With such a broad conceptualization of culture, it becomes evident that culture is fluid rather than static, and that when applied to the experiences of the students, illustrates the ways in which a sense of self is mediated by youth culture. I draw on Andre Alexis' (1995) phrase "borrowed blackness" to problematize the ways in which this sense of self and blackness draw on dominant representations and discourse that are marketed in the US and get translated and actualized within a Canadian environment. This dominance of the US in terms of the students' consumption of dress style, magazines, and music video would seem to indicate a sense of "borrowed blackness," a black identify formation that is not directly formed within the borders of Canada. If one views blackness as multiple identities and about "routes" as much as "roots" (Gilroy, 1995), then this research illustrates the ways in which blackness is a contested discourse within the Albertan context. Further, what emerges within this specific context is the way in which discourses of blackness are able to present themselves as a "regime of truth," a "real" blackness, that is able to draw on the ability of US media to dominate the ways in which blackness gets represented.

Under discussion are issues of nationalism and questions as to whether and how a sense of black nationalism can unify blackness beyond state borders. This latter question is not new but can be seen in the works of African-Canadian authors such as Alexis 1995), Walcott (1997), and Clarke (2000). For Clarke, the tension lies in:

> the question of the relationship between blackness and Canadianness; indeed , whether there can be a relationship between these identities, even for that matter, whether a fusion (as opposed to the usual confusion) can be negotiated between the Scylla of one and the Charybdis of the other. (Clarke, 2000, p. 8)

These often-competing senses of blackness illustrate the ways in which black nationalism operates as a dominant political discourse attempting to unify the "black community." However, such understandings are strongly contested through discourses that draw on affiliations to specific geographic regions

Afrocentric theorists such as Assante (1989) would postulate that blackness, and a close identification with Africa should be a given for the students under discussion. However, it should be noted that the narratives indicate that a process of "translation" (Bhabha, 1994) has taken place whereby these school youths recognize a link to Africa but make no direct claims of association. Their understandings of blackness within a Canadian social context are hybrid rather than unified; a hybridity that recognizes the heterogeneity of blackness alluded to in chapter two. However, while such hybridity might be more in keeping with the postulations of Hall, Gilroy, hooks, and others, it also underlines the difficulties of forming a united political front or an automatic sense of community based on the descriptor "black." Although these students position themselves within a discourse of blackness, they also draw on other discourses during their social interaction and production of black identities. It is noticeable how other identities, at times, intersect their sense of blackness to produce a complexity that is not always accounted for by the traditional psychological literature on black identity (Aboud, 1981; Clarke & Clarke, 1939).

Consequently, the lived experiences of these students undermine any straightforward essentialist discourse that would bind blackness as "sameness." The importance of viewing identity as complex and problematic rather than fixed and unified is evident in the data generated. Support for the latter findings can be found in Hall's account of the process he identifies as the "end of the innocent black subject" (1996).

Informal Learning.

It is evident that the school site acts as a place of learning wherein the students meet and learn from each other. What they learn however, is not necessarily what is stated in the formal curriculum but rather the informal curriculum that draws on student experiences within the school environment. The significance of this informal learning is heightened when placed in relation to the dominance of US media culture and its ability to proliferate through mediazation, representations and discourses on blackness across geographic borders (Thompson, 1990). So it is that the students access knowledge of black experiences primarily through the US media. These US-based images refer in particular to black youth culture, a specific stage of black identity. Many students recognised that their sense of black identity is something that would change as they moved from adolescence to adulthood, in other words, that identity was not static or fixed once and for all. Further, acceptance of this dominance of African-American culture as a primary site for informal learning varies from one student to another, since students also have available within their cultural repertoire access to parents as a source of knowledge about other forms of black experiences. These familial national backgrounds are another source through which the students develop symbolic meanings. For some, the links between their national heritages are strengthened through cultural formation related to their association with specific Caribbean islands.

In terms of gaining knowledge about the diaspora, the students themselves, in their everyday interaction at school, provide a resource for learning about each other. By identifying with the unifying category of black, the students have the opportunity to interact with other black students from the continent of Africa and its diaspora and to learn, however limited, about differences and similarities within the diaspora. Students with heritage only in North America or the continent of Africa are learning patois that is used in the Caribbean. This transfer of knowledge between the students is not automatic or unproblematic in that while patois can act as a site for broadening a sense of collectivity, it can also act to constrain collectivity through its heavy use in musical genres such as dance-hall reggae. The step-team also provides a similar site for learning about diasporan blackness as similar but different.

As part of this informal learning about blackness and its differing representations within the diaspora, coming together in high schools provides a way of "coming out" of claiming a sense of blackness. To understand what is going on for these students, I use the phrase "coming out" in terms of taking on and identification with blackness. With the emergence of a dominant discourse in high schools, there has to be an accounting by students as to how they place themselves in relation to, or within, such discourses. There is also a tension in representation evident in this process of being similar but different. This was illustrated during school-organized cultural events that encouraged representation of cultures. How does one represent a black unity that draws on the continent as well as the diaspora when students' knowledge is limited. For self-identified black students, there was no automatic culture that represents blackness. Rather, there was a situation of "nonsynchrony" (McCarthy, 1997), whereby identities are never fully aligned in time and space. Under pressure to identify a sense of unity, the students fall back on music and dominant representations constructed through youth culture.

Consumption of music, music videos, and magazines provides a way for the students to construct alliances based upon perceived similarities and differences. Genres such as r&b, rap, and reggae are identified as black musical forms. It is through identification with such forms of music that some of the most concrete identifications take place. In the thesis, these concrete identifications of the students illustrate how alternative music is constructed as binary to black informed musical genres, and how this construction then leads to certain discursive practices which maintain the distinction, while also reproducing it. Some students assumed that there was no "natural" affinity with someone who would identify her/himself as "alternative." Within some narratives there is also a coding of "alternative" music with whiteness and construction of the "other." For example, it is unclear as to whether the students use this discourse as a primary source of explanation or if it is selected to explain other aspects of life because it is viewed as more "rational" in terms of other aspects of one's life. Therefore it can be asked, did the student in chapter four really change schools because the atmosphere was considered too "alternative," and thus unreceptive of blackness? Or did the student leave the school for a variety of reasons and then use that specific discourse to code the experience because peers would more easily accept it?

Another interesting way in which youth culture, through music, television, and music videos, is used to make identification in the students' lives is through the Northside/Southside binary. Although not all students subscribed to this dualism and allocation of geographic place into social space, the discourse was acknowledged by most as either being active in the past or still active, to some extent, in the present. Using style and codes that draw on the "hood" genre, the students, in their individual interviews, consistently described the same area of the city as being designated as Edmonton's "hood." The narratives construct a distinction based, to some extent, upon socio-economic status in conjunction with style. This use of the term hood draws on codes constructed through hood movies such as *Boyz N the Hood*, *Sugar Hill*, and *Menace II Society*. The term hood acts as an anchor (Barthes, 1977) for the preferred meanings that are evoked through its use. The latter is also of interest because it shows that although the narratives attempt to construct black identity as having a sense of sameness, these same discourses act back upon themselves in order to challenge the meanings of such discourses. Within these same discussions, understandings of blackness also rely on what Hall (1996) identifies as the "end of the innocent black subject."

Although students readily identified themselves as black, they often found it difficult to move beyond "common-sense" understandings in accounting for similarities between themselves. While some students drew on skin colour, parental discipline, or experiences of racism within a white-dominated society as legitimation of blackness, it was through youth culture that they were able to articulate, most clearly, this tentative unity. This unity is described as tentative because while music consumption unified them, and created a sense of "us," it also enabled a gendered/national fragmentation of black identity through consumption of music. For example, at times, some of the female students with Caribbean heritage indicated that their choice of musical genres such as soca and calypso enabled them to reinforce, symbolically, an identification with Caribbean islands other than the dominant Jamaica.

Identity and Consumption

The concept of borrowed blackness is evident in terms of the discourses through which these students position themselves as desiring specific US-based youth culture. It should also be noted that although magazines and music videos heightened the students' desire for US dress style, consumption was not uniform across all students. Instead, the students' desire for US-derived style was often constrained by economics as well as geographic location. These constraints also act as enablers in the ways in which style becomes important in terms of its "use value" in a social context. It is at this point of the argument that one can see most clearly the ways in which the school acts as a stage upon which the students get to play out and use dress style in order to position themselves within discourses of consumption and identity. As well, being able to purchase and wear many of these hard-to-access styles enhances social status. The the ability of a student to access style before anyone else increases the cultural and social value of a specific item of clothing as well as its " use value." In terms of style, larger, more cosmopolitan centres such as Toronto are perceived as much less "dry" when compared to Edmonton.

At times the students can be seen as passive consumers without critique of their actions, especially in the ways in which some black males adopt and take on the dress style, walk, street slang, and argot of African-American youths as represented through rap and hip-hop. These representations are garnered through a "regime of representation" (Hall, 1997) and based on a specific form of hypermasculinity, coded through dress, talk, and walk. However, the emergence and use of the term "acting black" seems to be a way of "challenging" this passive sense of "borrowed blackness" and making a distinction from those who adopt this stereotypical representation of blackness. The phrase calls into the question the idea that such representations might be homogenised through a discourse of "authentic" blackness. There are also degrees to the acceptance of this performance of blackness. Males can wear hip-hop clothes without being challenged as acting, but if one also has the walk and, especially, the argot, then it is more likely that one will be identified as acting. As well, the overall emphasis on the black male body in sports and style has in some ways contoured the understanding of blackness to emphasise blackness as style at the expense of earlier political/nationalist discourses of blackness as based on knowledge and shared experience. The latter is akin to Gilroy's (2000) conception of "stylish solidarity" (see chapter 11). In terms of school, the students indicate that nonblack peers regard blackness with ambivalence, as a sign it can evoke both fear and desire.

Evident throughout is the way in which these identity formations intersect media consumption–a consumption that is heavily influenced by an unequal political economy that exists within a much larger geopolitical framework. Within this framework, the US is a dominant player which, through its ability to control various media sources and channels, is able to reinforce its relations of dominance with regard to Canadian economy and society. Through a process of economic and cultural globalization, the US has been able to expand its borders to maximize profits. This was most obvious in the ways in which Canadian-produced rap and youth culture comes to be marginalised within Canadian society, thus providing a contested terrain upon which issues of hegemonic control are fought over. So cultural dominance becomes intertwined with economic dominance.

Agency & Structure

Within the study, a tension emerges around the issue of agency. Proponents of the cultural imperialism thesis as described by Hoggart in chapter one "appear to simply assume that exposure to international audiovisual commodities automatically leads to an uncritical acceptance of this material (Bennet et. al., 1999, p. 205). Are these students dupes of the culture industry, or are they consumers, as populists such as John Fiske indicate, picking and choosing what they desire? This tension between agency and structure, the individual and society, is at the heart of Adorno's work and his critique of the culture industry. While some readings of Adrono and Horkheimer, as highlighted in chapter one, would seem to indicate that people are "dupes" of the culture industry, unable to assert any agency when faced with the ideology of consumption, others argue a less deterministic stance. In reading Simon Jarvis's (1998) interpretation of Adorno and his book *The Culture Industry*, I recognize that Adorno's stance was more complex than the position with which he is often aligned. As Jarvis argues:

> If Adorno's theory of the culture industry presented us with dupes on the one hand and conspirators on the other it would indeed be trivial, because the trick would only need to be exposed to be brought to an end. Adorno emphasizes, instead, that "This is the triumph of advertising in the culture industry: the compulsive mimesis of cultural commodities by consumers who at the time see through them." (p. 74)

Thus, if I align myself with Jarvis's interpretation of Adorno, I would have to admit that it reflects an actuality within my research in that the students narratives do indicate a sense of being able to see through the media while continuing to consume. Throughout the narratives on consumption, I am struck at the ways in which the students seem able to critique the relationship between production and consumption yet still go on to consume. It is almost as if, as part of capturing consumers, youth culture allows dissention to be expressed. The narratives represent the ways in which the present-day culture industry offers alternative discourses through which the students protest and are consequently co-opted into positions that support consumption. They are provided with a mechanism through which they are able to voice their displeasure while ultimately going on to consume and bolster capitalist production. Choice seems to be on offer, and whatever choice one makes always results in consumption. What is on offer to these students are competing discourses that they can position themselves within or in relation to. But whichever they choose seems to still end in consumption. The latter highlights that perhaps what is going on is an illustration of the way in which "interpellation" (Althusser, 1971) of these students to positions as "consumers" is not direct but is circumvented through alternative discourses of critique. The latter also illustrates that theoretically, it might be useful to reexamine the criticism directed against any attempt to study issues of ideology and false consciousness. If consumption of youth-culture products is undertaken despite the participants' critique, it is difficult to see how such recognition of potential exploitation can be viewed as necessarily empowering, allowing them to act on their own behalf. As indicated in the chapter "Mapping the Terrain," I regard ideology as meaning in the name of power. While the students do make meaning, as more recent cultural studies theorists such as John Fiske would emphasize, I would add that this making of meaning is shaped within an existing framework of power relations–a power relations that would seem to privilege consumerism, consumption, and ultimately capitalism.

Although the students exert a sense of agency with regard to the consumption of media culture, their consumption is not totally within the framework of cultural populism and the "power of the ordinary" (Mukerjee & Schudson, 1991). Instead it has to be recognised that while the students make meanings that privilege consumption and capitalism with regard to youth culture, these meanings are also shaped within an existing racialized, patriarchal, and heterosexual framework. This shaping of meaning by existing relations of dominance is evident in the ways in which some students responded to issues concerning sexual orientation. Further contouring this meaning in line with existing relations of dominance is the students' construction of "reality" that emerges through their consumption of media culture in general, and youth culture in particular. The youths' ability to move outside their existing frameworks of understandings is thus seriously constrained by the use of existing experiences to validate differing social "realities." Their construction and use of what they "know" as representative of social "reality" tends to reinforce the existing relations of dominance rather than pose a challenge to the status quo. In terms of explaining the relationship between consumption and agency, Anthony Giddens' (1976) concept of structuration attempts to build a bridge between the traditional dualism of agency and structure. Giddens argues that human beings always have the capacity to change their social circumstances, even if these are limited by specific social contexts (Layder, 1994).

Throughout the thesis, acknowledgement is given to the process of mediation taking place between individual students and their peers as they discuss and position themselves in relation to various discourses concerning commodification and consumption. Of import is the way in which the data constructs, through youth culture, contesting discourses that enable and constrain certain patterns of music consumption. The students' narratives reflect the discourses that challenge the ways in which hip-hop has in recent years become commodified. This commodification of youth culture is not just in relation to hip-hop culture. It is an on-going process that is consistent throughout the youth culture literature, charting the rise and fall of earlier subcultural styles and groups such as "mods" "hippies," and "punks." John Storey (1996) reveals such processes of commodification as ones where, "youth subcultures always move from originality and opposition to commercial incorporation and ideological diffusion as the cultural industries eventually succeed in marketing subcultural resistance for general consumption and profit" (Storey, 1996, p. 120). While these discourses of commodification are available to the students for critiquing consumption, few critiqued hip-hop as a cultural form in itself. As well, in examining the hip-hop music magazines such as *The Source*, *Rap Pages*, and *Vibe* one finds similar discourses of critique represented with regard to commodification of hip-hop. The question is raised; perhaps these discourses of critique within youth culture serve the function of providing a contesting discourse before the consumers construct one for themselves. The latter might therefore be regarded as trying to fix meaning in the name of power. As such, it could be seen as an ideology of consumption. Although I am inclined to look elsewhere for an explanation, what is going on can be seen as hegemonic, i.e. a contesting of different existing discourses around consumption and blackness upon a field of black youth culture.

What is purportedly on sale in this process of commodification are the experiences of African Americans. However, as I hope has been indicated through this thesis, these expanses are mediated and constructed through televisual and auditory images conveyed through the films, television, and music that the students listen to. These images that are consumed by all racialized groups within society are then put to differing uses. For some, adoption of these black-identified behaviour patterns, as in street slang such as "whassup," comes to reinforce a desire for a specific form of self-representation. If we view this desire in an intertextual way, we can perhaps view the desire for a representation of the self as "rebel" against an economic and social reality that has encouraged students to conform to what have been identified by theorists as neo-conservative times (Harrison and Kachur, 1999). This taking of meaning is of course refracted through gender, class and racialized identity. Thus, the meanings of these televisual and sound images can be seen as offering and operating differing ways to present the self. Thus it is possible to present one's self as "cool" through identification with such images. It is interesting to note the comments of black students to these "others" who attempt to identify with these specific representations of blackness.

Although chapter one highlights the question of ideology and hegemony, it is more in terms of illustrating the ways in which the two concepts have had an important effect on the development and understanding of cultural studies and its analysis of the relationship between media and its audience. Having gone back over the terrain of Neo- Gramscian hegemony in light of my research, I find that the concept is attractive in terms of an analysis that highlights power and indicates a struggle between dominant and subjugated groups. Although "hegemony" is no longer as acceptable as in the earlier theoretical formations of cultural studies in terms of analysis, the production of consent the production of consent that is described above can be viewed as akin to the production of hegemony. In line with my analysis, I would like to draw on Norman Fairclough (1995) who, in support of the concept argues that:

> Gramsci's concept of hegemony . . . is helpful here as a theory of power and domination which emphasizes power through achieving consent rather than coercion, and the importance of cultural aspects of domination depend upon a particular articulation of a plurality of practices. The issue with respect to a hegemony model becomes one of whether and how diverse discursive practices are articulated together within the order of discourse in ways which *overall* sustain relations of domination. (p. 55)

By looking at the way in which we are governed by the production and circulation of specific "regimes of truths" which organize the relations between knowledge and action in specific ways and specific fields, one way in which to regard the students' narratives is as "regimes of truth" within which they position them selves and are positioned within. This recognition of discourses can also work in conjunction with hegemony to indicate a more nuanced understanding of how power relations work through discourse. As Fairclough (1992) suggests:

> hegemony helps us . . . provid[e] for discourse both a matrix–a way of analysing the social practice within which the discourse belongs in terms of power relations, in terms of whether they reproduce, restructure or challenge existing hegemonies–a way of analysing the social practice within which the discourse belongs in terms of power relations. (p. 95)

In trying to identify the specifics of what is the driving force that accounts for such a positioning, one might well examine the ways in which the individual makes specific gains through pleasure. Certainly, within the theme of style discussed (in chapter eight), the desire to attain the "hard-to-acquire" becomes a primary motivator. As Rene Girard argues, "desire is imitative. I desire people because of their desirability by others." Some of the more recent cultural studies literature would seem to indicate that Gramsci's concept of hegemony is inadequate to understand the terrain upon which the fight between ideology and compliance takes place. However, the generation of data suggests that for these students, youth culture is a terrain upon which they encounter various discourses and ideologies. Gramsci, in writing on hegemony indicates this contestation of the terrain of culture. He argues that:

> . . . his theoretical consciousness (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 333)

The issue of the outcome of resistance is not as simple as some theorists might imply. While the students seem apolitical at present, the data suggests that the possibility exists for them to develop a sense of "vicarious empathy." While noting that one cannot totally determine the future behaviour of these students they might well be able, through this vicarious empathy to mobilize politically around a sense of blackness.

Reflection on Methodology

The framing of the research project and construction of the research object has affected the process and outcome of the data generation. By focussing on the experiences of African-Canadian students, I have narrowed the subject of research to one racialised group. This contrasts with poststructuralist theorization and its support of plurality and recognition of difference. Looking at other racialised youth groups within the school who also have access to black identified youth culture would have enabled a more in-depth analysis of racialised relations and its effects on consequent identity formation. I might have been able to garner some insight into understanding the ways in which racialised whiteness acts in conjunction with black-identified youth culture in order to produce specific subjectivities, in other words, the ways in which whiteness gets reproduced through black youth culture.

It should be noted, however, that there are advantages to such a narrowing of focus on black students in that it does allow me to identify the ways in which these African-Canadian students of the diaspora position themselves in relation to various identities that are on offer to them. This availability of identities is further complicated by living within a white-dominated society that is itself in a relation of dominance to its neighbour. This narrowing allows me to highlight how black identities are formed within a nation that does not overtly encourage or overtly recognize such an identity. While this narrow focus on blackness among the students can be criticised as not reflecting the diverse racialised subject positions that exist within the school, it does recognize the multiplicity and plurality of the African diaspora as well as differences within the group in terms of gender and sexuality.

Often, the value or worth of qualitative work is undermined by comparison with more positivist research frameworks that would enable a more direct generalisability of my findings to all African-Canadian students in Edmonton. Unless the results of data generation are generalisable to all black students, the project is of little value. However, such an orientation to research misses the nuances that can be gained from "understanding" the research participants and thus being able to make generalizations on a theoretical level. As well, in terms of generalisability, I use my previous research as a basis for comparison. While the results are different in some instances, these differences are more in terms of numerical distribution. One can ask the question, to what extent would one find such a representation of these various student youth identities in another school? From my research I would argue that one would find many of these identities among black students. However, in terms of the degree of collectivity among black students there would be variations according to school context and the number of students within a high school. As stated above, and in Kelly 1998, when black students enter high schools they are often faced with many more black students than previously encountered in either elementary or junior high. In some ways the process is akin to "coming out," i.e. a student has to decide to what extent they identify themselves as black and the significance of this blackness. For some students, blackness is based on essentialist understandings of skin colour and phenotype. For other students this understanding of blackness is politicized; blackness is consistent with a state of political consciousness. These understandings can be identified as discourses and "regimes of truth."

While religion is an important aspect of student life in both this and my previous research projects, more students in this research highlight its tension with discourses of youth culture. This tension is evident in terms of the students' consumption of films, music, and television and the ways in which they produce specific religious subjectivities. As well, the tension is evident in the way in way in which religious subject positions contest the production of certain school-approved subjectivities. These observations indicate a need for more research on the ways in which religious subjectivity intersects with youth culture and construction of school identities. My findings reveal not just class, sexuality, gender, and nationality but also religion as important in terms of complicating identity formation. The recognition of the importance of religion is often an under-theorised area within the cultural studies literature. The work of Cornel West and bell hooks' *Breaking Bread* (1991) are exceptions. Bearing in mind the enabling as well as constraining role that religion and the church has played in the lives of peoples of African descent, it is a surprising omission from the Black Cultural Studies

In the research I was struck by the ways in which sexual identities are constructed through and in relation to religion, a positioning that indicates the problematic nature of trying to develop a classroom environment that is based upon equity. The importance of the relationship magnified by the recent inclusion (in 1999) of sexual orientation within the Alberta Teachers' Association "Code of Professional Conduct." In terms of some of the discourses produced by the students with regard to sexuality and religion, it becomes evident that developing a quiet compliance might be as good as it gets with regard to an acceptance of differing sexual orientations. This also raises the question as to which of these rights has precedence: religion or sexuality? While critical pedagogues would indicate that teaching about race, class, and gender might develop a sense of critical consciousness, some students do not as readily accept this positioning with regard to sexuality.

Black youth culture at this specific historical juncture reveals a youth culture that is heavily weighted with masculinised understandings of identity. As a result, there is a skewing of my research towards a male dominance in some of the themes that emerge in the narratives. In terms of follow-up, or were I to redo the research project, I would perhaps, concentrate on the experiences of the young women rather than the young men and broaden my social group to include other racialized young women. Isolating young women as a social category might enable me to develop a more ethnographic understanding of how young women position themselves in relation to youth culture and its dominant code of masculinity.

As well as the specific areas identified above, there is a need to continue with analysis of the relationship between the cultural politics of schooling and identity. The latter type of research assumes even more urgency with recent research findings in the UK linking black male underachievement with black youth culture (Sewell, 2000). By examining the question of cultural choice, one can garner how such choices position "us" and how they tell "us" and "others" who we are not. Such choices sort us into "kind." This sorting of "kinds," this "us" and "them," is evident in the choices that the students make through their reception of media. Culture can thus be seen as a part of that process of sorting, "creating a social space" for ourselves, partly given, partly chosen, in the open-ended formation of our identities.

Praxis

Praxis indicates informed actions (McLaren 1992), and in this section of the thesis I would like to highlight the ways in which the data generated in the research might affect future actions. Perhaps one of the most important questions raised by the thesis is to what extent is there one ideal black identity and, if it exists, of what does it consist? Such reflections as to what a black identity consists of are important in terms of developing an inclusive school curriculum as well as working across groups in a community setting. At times, theorists have highlighted how conception of "community" as "same" can result in the subjugation of the differences within that descriptor (Hall, 1990; McCarthy, 1997). Starting with the community, I would argue that rather than aim for a one-dimensional representation of blackness, research begin with a deliberation on the African diaspora in relation to the Continent. This would make more evident the way in which blackness is conceptualized. The students' narratives make evident the ways in which understandings of blackness within this high school are plural, fragmented rather than unified, are evident in the narratives. Thus fragmentation even in the face of homogenizing influence of the media is based on roots of the students in the Continent and its diaspora.

Curriculum

I think the issues of identity that are raised are pertinent to the classroom teacher, both in terms of curricula and in terms of pedagogy. With regard to schooling, the implications of the study for pedagogy and curriculum are not obvious, indicating a direct correlation. But, certainly, the recognition of the importance of youth culture in the lives of the students would be a starting point that would lead to a position where critical media literacy could quite viably be undertaken in school. By critical media study, I mean enabling students to recognize the constructed nature of media texts and the ways in which they infiltrate our everyday life and take on a concrete actuality. Giroux and Simon (1989), in their groundbreaking article "Popular Culture as a Pedagogy of Pleasure and Meaning," allude to the greater emphasis being given to the study of popular culture by radical educators. For Giroux and Simon:

> Educators who refuse to acknowledge popular culture as a significant basis of knowledge that students actually have and so eliminate the possibility of

> developing a pedagogy that links school knowledge to the differing subject relations that help to constitute their everyday lives. (1989, p. 3)

I would caution against any uniform adoption of popular culture into the curriculum. Since youth culture is constantly changing, it therefore becomes problematic to have a once-and-for-all approach that would adopt a narrow focus on just hip-hop culture. Recognition within the curriculum would have to be an unstable entity recognizing the changing emphases of youth culture. Entry to this cultural terrain would probably have to be dialogical and based upon what Stephen Kemmis describes as dialectical thinking. As Carr and Kemmis (1983) postulate: "it is an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth between elements like part and whole, knowledge and action, process and product subject and object" (pp. 36-37). If one were to use an approach that encompassed development of media literacy based on the ability to recognize the multiplicity and semiotic nature of text, such an approach would be useful. As well, the ability to recognize, as Fairclough indicates, that all texts constitute identities, relationships and representations would be a useful tool in terms of preparing students to approach their world with a critical eye. Recognizing the concepts that can be applied therefore would allow teachers to be able to deal with an ever-changing plethora of youth culture. Youth culture, as indicated by early CCCS theorists such as Hebdige (1979) and Cohen (1980), is often an oppositional stance. It is this opposition that makes it unique as "youth culture." Adoption of a critical media route in terms of this area of work would provide an opportunity to enter discussions in terms of race, class, and gender. As is always the case, pedagogy is as important as what is included within the curriculum, therefore it is useful to use youth culture as a learning tool via the analysis of text and discussion of social identities.

Further, the unequal relationship between political economy and production of identity can be used to highlight the unequal ways in which economy can effect the representations that are made available to students. The ability to use such issues within the classroom has the potential to tap into the students' understandings of a situation, as well as being able to start from a perspective where the students already have an understanding, no matter how partial. Questions of US dominance can be brought into the public space of the classroom, as it already is evoked within the more ambivalent public/private space of the corridors.

As teachers, we need to think of our students as complex beings with intersecting identities rather than just possessing one unified identity. This requires more of a focus on the ways in which identities become constructed through discourses of power, gender, race, sexuality, and class. Students are complex entities with a variety of identities that come into play in different contexts. We need to provide a dialogic environment in which we can develop dialectic thinking in order to enable critical thinking. By undertaking the latter, the hegemonic terrain upon which many youth cultures and identities are represented and contested can be exposed and challenged. Recognition of plurality allows for working through and across social differences as students come to see that they have more than one identity and therefore similarities as well as differences across a range of lived experiences.

Among the students of African descent, there is a lack of knowledge about the continent of Africa and its diaspora. Community organisations and schools need to evaluate the necessity of undertaking such teaching of the variety and complexity of experiences that represent the African diaspora. Such an understanding would reinforce the discourses of diasporan consciousness and challenge the dominance of what Gilroy (2000) identifies as "stylish solidarity." Knowledge-producers involved with community work need to develop a sense of solidarity based on knowledge rather than just body image. In some ways, this would be an enabling position, drawing on existing discourses that could compete in some minor way with those of "borrowed blackness." I would like to add that "borrowed blackness" is not necessarily negative, in that most culture is dialogical. Nonetheless, when the dialogue is one-way and serves to enable cultural hegemony, it becomes more problematic in terms of other issues of power that are played out.

To conclude I would like to leave you with the voices of three of the students. Through these narratives one can identify the ways in which media culture becomes embedded in the everyday lives of the students and how media culture is a terrain upon which discourses contest each other in a struggle for cultural hegemony.

As this student identified, positioning one's self in relation to a discourse and language says something about one's self:

> Student 1: *Okay, me and my people I hang out with, like my–crew. Like, we pretty much listen to rap. And then lines from it stick in our heads. And we use it like all the time. Like the other day when I came in here and I was like talking that line "pimping ain't easy" right? And, um, that's pretty much gone. I stopped using that. I use it every once in a while, like if it's necessary, but it still comes and goes.*

Or, to repeat again, as one student as "ironic" viewer confessed to the hegemonic hold of the "popular":

> Student 2: *Ok. Jenny. I must admit I am ashamed to honestly say so. Sometimes I do watch it. It's a really bad show. He is like totally demoralized. But I can't help it. It's kind of addictive sometimes. People are so stupid. But it's funny, it's really funny. Because, well, maybe some of them are faking it, but you can tell that some of them are not faking it. And they are so dumb.*

Or, as another student indicated how consumption can be resisted:

> Student 3: *I am not the kind of guy who goes for much name-brand stuff.*
>
> J: *Are you not? How comes?*
> Student 3: *Well, I find those worldly stuff. I don't keep my mind on worldly stuff 'cuz I am a Christian.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY & APPENDICES

Bibliography

Abdul-Lateef, M. (1998, July). Love's gonna get'cha. *Rap Pages.*

Aboud, F. (1981). Ethnic self-identity. In R. Gardner & R. Kallen (Eds), *A Canadian social psychology of ethnic relations.* Toronto: Methuen Publications, 37-56.

Acker, J., Barry, K., & Esseveld, J. (1983). Objectivity and truth: Problems in doing feminist research. *Women's Studies International Forum 6*, 423-435.

Adorno, T. (1991). *The culture industry: Selected essays on mass culture.* UK: Routledge.

Adorno, T., & Horkheimer, M. (1979). *Dialectic of enlightenment.* (Trans. J. Cummings). UK: Verso.

Adria, M. (1998). Contemplating the communication state. *Journal of Canadian Studies* (33) 3, 163-169.

Alexis, A. (1995) (May). Borrowed blackness. *This Magazine, 28*(8*)*, 14-20.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (1999). Code of professional conduct.

Althuser, L. (1971). On ideology and ideological state apparatuses. In *Lenin and philosophy and other essays.* New York: Monthly Review Press.

Ang, I. (1985). *Watching Dallas: Soap opera and the melodramatic imagination.* UK: Methuen.

Anzuluda, G. (1987). *Borderlands/la frontera: The new mestiza.* San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute.

Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and difference in the global cultural economy. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global culture: Nationalism, globalisation, modernity* (pp. 295-311). UK: Sage.

Apple, M. (1996). Power meaning and identity: Critical sociology of education in the United States. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 17*(2), 125-144.

Arac, J. 1986. (Ed.). *Postmodernism and politics.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Asante, M. (1989). (2nd printing). Afrocentricity. NJ, Trenton: Africa World Press Inc.

Baker, Jr. H. (1993). *Rap and the academy.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Baker, Jr. H., Diawara, M. Lindeborg, R. (Eds.). (1996). *Black British cultural studies.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bannerji, H. (1995). (Ed.). *Under the gaze: Essays in racism, feminism and politics.* Toronto, Ontario: Sister Vision

Banton, M. (1967). *Race relations.* London, UK: Tavistock.

Banton, M. (1977). *The idea of race.* London, UK: Tavistock.

Press.

Barker, C. (1999). *Televison, globalization and cultural identities*. UK: Open University Press.

Barker, M. (1981). *The new racism*. London, UK: Junction Books.

Barthes, R. (1977). Image-music-text. UK: Routledge.

Berger, P., & Luckman, T. (1967). *The social construcation of reality*. UK: Allen Lane.

Bell, D. (1976). *The coming of post-industrial society*. New York: Basic.

Bennett, T. (1986). Popular culture and the turn to Gramsci. In T. Bennett, C. Mercer, & J. Woollacott (Eds.) *Popular culture and social relations* (pp. vii-xi). UK: Open University Press.

Bennett, T., Emmison, M., & Frow, J. (1999). Accounting for Tastes: Australian everyday cultures.

Benjamin, W. (1973). The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction. *Illuminations*. (Trans. H. Zohn) UK: Fontana/Collins

Bhabha, H. (1990). The third space. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity community, culture, and difference*. London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.

Bhabha, H. (1994). *The location of culture*. UK: Routledge.

Billig, M. (1997). From codes to utterances: Cultural studies, discourse and psychology. In M. Ferguson, M., & Golding, P. (Eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (pp. 205-226). London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (1982). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Methods*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bowles, S. & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling capitalist America*. New York: Basic Books.

Black Women Working Group. (2000). *Black women and economic autonomy*. Edmonton: Black Women Working Group.

Black Learners Advisory Committee. (1994). *Black report of education: Redressing inequity: Empowering black learners (Volume: 1 Summary)*. Halifax: NS: Black Learners Committee.

Brand, D. (1993). "A working paper on Black women in Toronto: Gender, race and class." In H. Bannerji (Ed.), *Returning the gaze: Essays on racism, feminism, and politics* (pp.270-297). Toronto, ON: Sister Vision.

Braxton, C. (1998 July). Soulman, *RapPages*, 86-90.

Britzman, D. (1991). Decentering discourses in teacher education: Or, the unleashing of popular things. *Journal of Education, 173(3)*, 60-80. Brunsdon, C. (1996). A thief in the night: Stories of feminism in the 1970s at CCCS. In D. Morley, & K-H Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies*, (pp. 276-286). London, UK: Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble*. UK: Routledge.
Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter*. UK: Routledge.

Bynoe, Y. (July 14, 2000) The white boy shuffle, *Politically Black* http://politicallyblack.com/Full%20Disclose.htm.

Calliste, A. (1987). Sleeping car porters in Canada: An ethnically submerged split labour market. *Canadian Ethnic Studies 19*(1), 1-20.

Calliste, A. (1993-4 Winter). Race, gender and Canadian immigration policy: Blacks from the Caribbean, 1900-1932. *Journal of Canadian Studies, 28*(4), 131-148.

Carby, Hazel. (1982). White women listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood. In *The empire strikes back* (pp.212-235). U.K: CCCS, Hutchinson.

Carby, H. (1994). Encoding white resentment. In C. McCarthy, & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp.236-247). New York: Routledge.

Carey, J. (1997). Reflections on the project of American cultural studies. In M. Ferguson, M., & Golding, P. (Eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (pp. 1-24). London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Carey, J. (1989). *Communication and culture: Essays on media and society*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Carmichael, S. & Hamilton, C. (1967). *Black power*. UK: Penguin Books Ltd.

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1983). *Becoming critical: Knowing through action research*. Victoria: Deakin University.

Carter, V., & Leffler Akili, W. (1981). *The window of our memories*. B.C.R Society of Alberta.

Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. (1982). *The empire strikes back*. UK: Hutchinson.

Chalmers, V. (1997). White-out: Multicultural performances in a progressive school. In M. Fine, L. Weis, L. Powell &L. Mun Wong (Eds.) *Off White: Readings on race, power, & society* (pp. 66-78). UK: Routledge.

Chambers, I. (1976). A strategy for living. In S. Hall, & T. Jefferson (Eds.), *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (pp. 157-166). UK: Hutchinson.

Clarke, G.E. (1996). Must all Blackness be American?: Locating Canada in Borden's "Tightrope Time," or nationalizing Gilroy's Black Atlantic. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 28* (3) Special Issue, 56-71.

Clarke, G.E. (2000). Treason of the Black intellectual. *http://www.athabascau.ca/writers/geclarke.html.*

Clarke, J., Hall, S. Jefferson, T., & Roberts, B. (1976). *Subcultures, cultures and* *class: A theoretical overview*. UK: Hutchinson.

Clarke, K., & Clarke, M. (1939). The development of consciousness of self and the emergence of racial identification in Negro pre-school children. *Journal of Social Psychology 10*, 591-599.

Clarke, K., & Clarke, M. (1947). Emotional factors in racial identification and preference in negro pre-school children. *Journal of Negro Education 19*, 341-350.

Clay, J. 1989. Epilogue: The ethnic future of nations. *Third World Quarterly, 4*, 223-233.

Codjoe, H. (1997). *Black students and school success*. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Alberta, Alberta.

Coffey, A., Holbrook, B., & Atkinson, P. (1996). Qualitative data analysis: Technologies and representations. *Sociological Research Online,* 1(1). <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/1/1/4.html>.

Cohen, P. (1980). Subcultural conflict and working class community. In S. Hall, D. Hobson., A. Lowe., & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language*, (pp.78-87). London: Hutchinson

Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought.* New York: Unwin Hyman.

Collins, P. (1998). Negotiating selves: reflections on 'unstructured 'interviewing *Sociological Research Online*, 3(3). <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/3/3/2.html>.

Cooke, B. (1911). The Black Canadians. *MacLeans Magazine* 23 (1). 3-11

Cooper, D. (1999). (2nd Ed). *Existentialism*. London: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Cross, W. (1978). The Thomas and Cross models on psychological Nigrescence: A literature review. *Journal of Black Psychology, 4(1),* 13-31.

Curran, J., Gurevitch, M & Woollacott, J. (1982). The study of media: theoretical approaches In M. Gurevitch et al. (Eds.), *Culture, society and the media*. London: Methuen.

Davies, I. (1995). *Cultural studies and beyond: Fragments of empire*. UK: Routledge.

Dei, G.J.S. (1996). *Anti-racism education theory and practice*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publisher.

Dei, G. J.S., Mazzuca, J., McIsaac, E., & Zine, J. (1997). *Reconstructing "Drop-Out": A critical ethnography of the dynamics of Black students' disengagement from school.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). Introduction: Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-17). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Desmond, J. (1994) (Winter). Embodying Difference: Issues in Dance and Cultural Studies. *Cultural Critique* 33-63.

Diawara, M. (1996). Black British cinema: Spectatorship and identity formation. In H.A. Baker, Jr., M, Diawara, & R. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Dolphin, R. (1999, October 24). Browsing through our multitude of malls. *Edmonton Journal*, E9.
Du Bois, W.E.B. (1969). *Souls of Black folks*. New York: Signet Classic

Dyer, R. (1988). White. *Screen* 29(4), 44-65.

Dyson, M. (1993). Be like Mike? Michael Jordan and the pedagogy of desire. *Cultural Studies 7*, 1. 64-72.

Eagleton, T. (1996). *Illusions of postmodernism*. UK: Blackwell Publishers

Easthope, A., & McGowan, K. (Eds.) (1992). *A critical and cultural theory reader*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Edmonton Social Planning. 1992. *Because of colour*. Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Social Planning Council.

Elliott, J, & Fleras, A. (1992). *Unequal relations: An introduction to ethnic and racial dynamics in Canada*. Scarborough ON: Prentice-Hall.

Ellsworth, E. (1993). I pledge allegiance: The politics of reading and using educational films. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education (pp. 201-219)*. London: Routledge.

Essed, P, (1991). *Understanding everyday racism*. California, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, Inc.

Faber, P., Holm, G., & Provenzo Jr. (Eds.) (1994). *Schooling in the light of popular culture*. New York: SUNY.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Fairclough, N. (1995). *Media discourse*. London: Arnold.

Fanon, F. (1967). *Black skins White masks*. New York: Grove Cross.

Farrakhan, L. (1995). A call to watch. *Emerge7* (1).

Fiske, J. (1988). Meaningful moments. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* (Sept) (pp. 246-250).

Fiske, J. (1989). *Reading the popular*. Boston: Unwinttyman.

Fiske, J. (1992a). British cultural studies and television. In R. Allen (Ed.), *Channels of discourse, reassembled* (pp. 284-326). London: Routledge

Fiske, J. (1992b). The culture of the everyday. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson & P. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 154-173). New York: Routledge.

Fiske, J. (1994). Audience: Cultural practice and cultural studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.189-198). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. (1994). Interviewing: The art of science. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.361-376). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Foster, C. (1996). *A place called heaven: The meaning of being Black in Canada.* Toronto, ON: Harper Collins

Ferguson, M., & Golding, P. (1997). *Cultural studies in question.* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977.* (Ed. Colin Gordon). New York: Pantheon.

Foucault, M. (1984). *The history of sexuality.* Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin

Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman, and P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self, a seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst, MA, University of Massachusetts Press.

Frankenberg, R. (1993). *White women race matters: The social construction of whiteness.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Frankenberg, R. (1997). Local whiteness, localizing whiteness. In R. Frankenberg (Ed.), *Displacing whiteness: Essays in social and cultural criticism* (pp.1-34). London and Durham: Duke University Press.

Fuller, M. (1980). Black girls in a London comprehensive. In R. Deem (Ed.), *Schooling for women's work* (pp. 52-65). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Furlong, V. J. (1984). Black resistance in the liberal comprehensive. In S. Delamont (Ed.), *Readings on interaction in the classroom.* UK: Methuen.

Geertz, C. (1973). Thick descriptions: Towards an interpretative theory of culture. In C. Geertz (Ed.), *The interpretation of cultures.* New York: Basic Books.

George, N. (1992). *Buppies, b-boys, baps, bohos: Notes on post-soul Black culture.* New York: Harper Collins.

George, N. (1998). *Hip-hop America.* Penguin

Giddens, A. (1976). *New rule of sociological method.* London,UK: Hutchinson

Giddens, A. (1984). *The constitution of society.* UK: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (Eds.). (1987). Structuralism, post-structuralism and the production of culture. In A.Giddens., & J.Turner, Social *theory today*, (pp.195-223), CA: Polity Press.

Giddens, A. (1990). *The consequences of modernity.* UK: Polity.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity.* Oxford: Polity Press.

Gillespie, M. (1995). *Television, ethnicity and cultural change.* London,UK: Routledge.

Gilroy, P. (1987). *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack.* London, UK: Hutchinson.

Gilroy, P. (1992). Cultural studies and ethnic absolutism. In L. Grossberg., C. Nelson & P. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 187-198). New York: Routledge.

Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Gilroy, P. (1995) Roots and routes: Black identity as an outernational project. In H. Harris, H. Blue & E. Griffith (Eds.), *Racial and ethnic identity: psychological development and creative expressions* (pp.15-30). New York: Routledge.

Gilroy, P. (1996). British cultural studies and the pitfalls of identity. In H. Baker, Jr. M. Diawara & R. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies* (pp. 223-239) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Gilroy, P. (1997). Diaspora and the detours of identity. In K. Woodward, (Ed.), *Identity and difference*, (pp. 299-343).

Gilroy, P. (2000). *Between camps.* UK: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press.

Giroux, H. Simon, R. (Eds). (1989). *Popular culture: Schooling and everyday life.* Toronto: OISE.

Giroux, H. (1993). Living dangerously: Identity politics and the new cultural racism: Towards a critical pedagogy of representation. *Cultural Studies, 7*(1), 1-27.

Giroux, H. (1996). *Fugitive cultures: Race, violence & youth.* NewYork: Routledge.

Giroux, H. (1997). *Channel surfacing: race talk and the destruction of today's youth.* NY: St. Martin's Press.

Giroux, H. & Trend, D. (1992). Cultural workers, pedagogy and the politics of difference: Beyond cultural conservatism. *Cultural Studies, 6*(1), 51-71.

Gitlin, T. (1997). The anti-political populism of cultural studies. In M. Ferguson, P. Golding (Eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (pp. 25-38). London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Glissant, E. (1992). Caribbean discourse: reversion and diversion. In J.A. Arnold & K. Drame, (Eds.), & J. Dash (Trans.) *Caribbean discourse: Selected essays* (pp. 14-18). University Press of Virginia.

Goetz, J., & LeCompte, M. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research.* San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Gonzales, Nancy., & Cauce, Ana Marie. 1995. Ethnic Identity and Multicultural Competence: Dilemmas and Challenges for Minority Youth. In Will D. Hawley and Anthony W. Jackson (eds.), *Towards a Common Destiny: Improving Race and Ethnic Relations in America.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Govia, F. (1988). Blacks in Canada: In search of the promise: A bibliographic guide to the history of black in Canada. Edmonton: Harambee Centres Canada

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks.* (Edited by Q. Hoare & G. Nowell-Smith). London: Lawrence & Wishart

Gray, H. (1993). African-American political desire and the seductions of contemporary cultural politics. *Cultural Studies, 7*(3), 364-373.

Gray, H. (1995). *Watching race*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Guba. E. & Lincoln, Y. (1981). *Effective evaluation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers

Hall, S. (1980). Encoding/decoding. In S. Hall, D. Hobson, A, Lowe & P. Willis (Eds.), *Culture, media, language*. UK: Hutchinson.

Hall, S. (1982). The rediscovery of 'ideology: The return of the "repressed"in media studies. In M.Gurevitch, T. Bennett, J. Curran, & J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Culture, society and the media* (pp 56-90). London: Methuen.

Hall, S. (1988). The toad in the garden: Thatcherism among the theorists. In L. Grossberg, & C. Nelson (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture*, (pp 35-57). Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Hall, S. (1989). New ethnicities. In K.Mercer (Ed.), *Black film, British cinema* BFI/ICA Documents 7, 27-31.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural identity and dispora. In J.Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity community, culture, and difference* (pp. 222-237). London, UK: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1991). The local and the global: Globalization and ethnicity. In A. King, (Ed.), *Culture, globalization and the world-system* (pp.19-40). London, UK: Macmillan.

Hall, S. (1992). The question of cultural identity. In S. Hall, D. Held & T. McGrew (Eds.), *Modernity and its futures* (pp. 274-323). UK: Open University.

Hall, S. (1993). Culture, community, nation. *Cultural Studies 7*(3), 349-363

Hall, S. (1996a). New ethnicities. In H. Baker, Jr. M. Diawara & R. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies* (pp. 163-172) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, S. (1996b). Cultural studies and its theoretical legacies. In D. Morley & Kuan-Hsing Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 262-275) UK: Routledge.

Hall, S. (Ed.). (1997). *Representation, cultural representation and signifyingpractices*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Hall, S., & Jefferson, T. (Eds.). (1976). *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain*. London: Hutchinson.

Hall, S., Critcher, C., Jefferson, T., Clarke , J., & Roberts, B. (1978). *Policing the crisis: "Mugging" the state and law and order*. London UK: Macmillan.

Hardt, H. (1996). British cultural studies and the return of the 'critical' in American mass communications research: accommodation or radical change. In D. Morley & K-H Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall; Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp.102-111). London: Routledge.

Harrison, T. & Kachur, J. (Eds.). (1999). *Contested classrooms*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press.

Hartley, J. (1994). Culture. In T. O'Sullivan, J. Hartley, D. Saunders, M.

Montgomery, & J. Fiske (Eds.), *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies* (pp. 68-71). London, UK: Routledge.

Hartley, J. (1994). Nation. In T. O'Sullivan, J. Hartley, D. Saunders, M. Montgomery, & J. Fiske (Eds.), *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies* (pp. 196-197). London, UK: Routledge.

Harvey, D. (1989). *The condition of postmodernity*. UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

Haslett, T. (1998) (October 11). Manthia Diawara http://www.tiac.net/users/thaslett

Hayashi-Tennant, J. (1999 April 23-29) Musicmaster, *TV Times*. (Edmonton Journal).

Haynes, V. D. (1999 July 14). TV "whitewash" slammed, C3.

Haymes, S. N. (1995). White culture and the politics of racial difference: implications for multiculturalism. In C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy and the politics of difference* (pp.105-128). New York: SUNY.

Hebdige, D. (1976). Reggae, rastas & rudies. In S. Hall, & T. Jefferson (Eds.), *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (pp.135-55). London: Hutchinson.

Hebdige, D. (1979). *Subculture: The meaning of style*. London,UK: Methuen & Co Ltd.

Hebdige, D. (1988). *Hiding in the light*. London: Routledge.

Helm, R. (2000, January 15,). City of angels faces a hellish uphill battle. *Edmonton Journal*, D1.

Henriques, J., Holloway, W., Urwin, C., Venn, C., & Walkerdine, V. (Eds.). (1984). *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation, and subjectivity*. London: Methuen.

Henry, F., & Tator, C. (1994). Ideology of racism: Democratic racism *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 26*(2), 1-14.

Henry, F. & Tator, C. (2000). *Racist discourses in Canada's English print media*. Toronto: The Canadian Race Relations Foundation.

Hinsliff, G., & Bright, M. (2000 Aug 24-30,). Black youth culture blamed as youths fail. *Guardian Weekly*, p. 7)

Hoggart, R. (1957). *The uses of literacy*. UK: Chatto and Windus.

Honneth, A. (1995). *The fragmented world of the social: Essays in social and political philosophy*. New York: SUNY.

hooks, b. (1981). *Ain't I a woman?* Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1984). *Feminist theory: Margin to centre*. Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1990). Postmodern blackness. *Postmodern. Culture, 1*(1), 1-14.

hooks, b. (1992). *Black Looks*. Toronto, Ontario: Between the Lines.

hooks, b. (1994). *Outlaw culture: Resisting representations*. New York: Routledge.

hooks, b., & West, C. (1991). *Breaking bread: Insurgent black intellectual life*. Toronto: Between the lines.

Hooks, G. (1997). *The Keystone legacy: The recollections of a black settler*.

Hubbard, R. (1981). The Emperor doesn't wear any clothes: The impact of feminism on biology. In D. Spender, (Ed.), *Men's studies modified: The impact of feminism on the academic disciplines* (pp. 213-236). Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Hudak, G. 1993. Technologies of marginality. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race Identity and Representation in Education* (pp. 172-188). New York: Routledge.

Isajiw, W. (1999). *Understanding diversity: Ethnicity and race in the Canadian context*. Toronto: Thompson Educational Publishing Inc.

Jackson. P. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Holt Rheinhart & Winston.

James, C. (1990). *Making it: Black Youth, Racism and Career Aspirations in a Big City*. Oakville, ON: Mosaic Press.

James, C.L.R. (1980). *Spheres of existence*. UK: Allison & Busby.

James, C.L.R. (1980). (Revised) *The Black Jacobins*. UK: Allison & Busby.

James, W. (1996). The making of black identities. In J. Hutchinson & A. Smith, (Eds.), *Ethnicity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University.

Jarvis, S. (1998). *Adorno: A critical introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Julien, I. & Mercer, K. (1996). De margin and de centre. In H. Baker, Jr. M. Diawara & R. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies* (pp. 194-209) Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kelly, J. (1998). *Under the gaze: Learning to be Black in White society*. Halifax: Fernwood Press.

Kelley, R. (1997). *Yo' mama's disfunktional! Fighting culture wars in urban America*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Kelley, R. (1994). *Race rebels: Culture, politics and the Black working class*. New York: The Free Press.

Kellner, D. (1995). *Media culture, cultural studies, identity and politics between the modern and the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Kellner, D. (1999). http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell16.htm- (1-19)

Kinchloe, J., & McLaren, P. (1994). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.138-157). California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Koza, J. E. (1994). Rap music: The cultural politics of official representation. *The review of education /pedagogy/cultural studies (16)* 2, 171-196

Kruger, R. (1988). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Kuhn, Thomas. (1970). (2nd Ed). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kurzweil, E. (1980). *The age of structuralism: Levie-Strauss to Foucault* New York: Columbia University Press.

Labov, W. (1973). The logic of non-standard English. In N. Keddie (Ed.), *Tinker tailor: The myth of cultural deprivation*, (pp.21-66). Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books Ltd.

Laclau, E. & C. Mouffe. (1985). *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* (trans Winston Moore & Paul Cammack). London: Verso.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart: Feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review 56* (3), 257-277.

LeCompte, M. (1993). A Framework for Hearing Silence: What Does Telling Stories Mean When We Are Supposed To Be Doing Science. In D. McLaughlin & W. Tiernney (Eds.), *Naming silent lives: Personal narratives and the process of education* (pp. 9-27). New York: Routledge.

LeCompte, Margaret. 1978. Learning to work: The hidden curriculum of the classroom. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly (9)* 1

Levinson, B. (1992). Ogbu's anthropology and the critical ethnography of education: A reciprocal interrogation. *Qualitative studies in education 5* (3), 202-225.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

Malinowski, S. (1995). *Race, resistance, and rap music*. Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Alberta.

Marable, M. (1995). Beyond racial identity politics. In M. Anderson, & P. Hill Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender* (pp. 363-365). California: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Marcuse, H. (1968). *One-dimensional man*. London: Sphere.

Mason, D. (1986). Introduction. controversies and continuities in race and ethnic relations. In J. Rex & D. Mason (Eds.), *Theories of race and ethnic relations* (pp. 1-19). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Matthews, A. (1998, June). Northern exposure. *Rap Pages*. 66-72.

McCarthy, C. (1995). The problem of origins: Race and the contrapuntal nature of educational experience. In C. Sleeter & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy and the politics of difference* (pp.245-268). New York: SUNY.

McCarthy, C. (1997). Nonsynchrony and social difference: An alternative to the current radical accounts of race and schooling. In A.H. Halsey, H.Lauder, P. Brown, A. Stuart Wells (Eds.), *Education, culture economy society* (pp. 541-556). UK: Oxford University Press.

McCarthy, C. (1993). After the canon. In C. McCarthy, & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp.289-305). New York: Routledge.

McCarthy, C., & Crichlow, W. (1993). (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education*. New York: Routledge.

McCutcheon, G. (1981). On the interpretation of classroom observations. *Educational researcher 10* (5), 5-10.

McGuigan, J. (1997). Cultural populism revisited. In M. Ferguson, P. Gold (Eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (pp. 138-154). London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

McCaskell, T. (1995). Anti-racist education and practice in the public school system. In S. Richer &L. Weir (Eds), *Beyond Political correctness: Toward the inclusive University*. (pp. 253-272). Toronto: University of Toronto.

McLaren, P. (1993). Border disputes: Multicultural narrative, identity formation and critical pedagogy in postmodern America. In J. McLaughlin & B. Tierney (Eds.), *Naming silent lives: personal narratives and the process of educational change* (pp. 201-235). London: Routledge

McLaren, P. & Sleeter, C. (1995). *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy and the politics of difference* (pp. 245-268). New York: SUNY.

McLuhan, M. (1964). *Understanding media*. London; Routledge.

McRobbie. A. & Garber, J. (1976). Girls and subcultures. In S. Hall, & T. Jefferson (Eds.), *Resistance through rituals: Youth subcultures in post-war Britain* (pp. 209-222). UK: Hutchinson.

McRobbie. A. (1984). Dance and social fantasy. In A. McRobbie & M. Nava (Eds.), *Gender and Gêneration* (pp130-161). UK: McMillan.

McRobbie, A. (1981). Settling accounts with subcultures: A feminist critique. In T. Bennett, G. Martin, C. Mercer & J. Woollacott (Eds.), *Culture, ideology and social process: A reader* (pp.112-124). UK: Open University.

McRobbie, A. (1991). New times in cultural studies. *New Formations* 13 (Spring).

McRobbie, A. (1994). Postmodernism and popular culture. London, UK: Routledge.

McRobbie, A. (1997). The es and the anti-es: New questions for feminism and cultural studies. In M. Ferguson, P. Golding (Eds.), *Cultural studies in question* (pp. 170-186). London UK: Sage Publications Ltd.

Mead, G, H. (1934). *Mind self and society.* Chicago: University of Chicago. Press.

Mercer, K. (1994). *Welcome to the jungle*. UK: Routledge.

Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in education: A qualitative approach.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Merriam, S., & Simpson, E. (1995). (2nd Ed). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults.* Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company

McCurdy, D. & Spradley J. (1972). *The cultural experience: Ethnography in complex society.* Chicago: Science Research Associates.

Miles, R. (1982). Racism and migrant labour. London, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Montague, A. 1974. *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race (5th ed.).* New York: Oxford University Press.

Morgan, D. L. (1988). *Focus group as qualitative research.* California, Newbury Park: Sage.

Morley, D. (1980). *The Nationwide' audience*. UK: British Film Institute.

Morley, D. (1986). *Family television: Cultural power and domestic leisure* UK: Comedia.

Morrow, R. & Torres, C. (1995). *Social theory and education.* SUNY Press.

Mouffe, C. (1994). For a politics of nomadic identity. In G. Robertson et al (Eds.), *Travellers' tales: Narratives of home and displacement* (pp. 105-113). U.K: Routledge.

Mukerjee, C. & Schudson, M. (Eds). (1991). *Rethinking popular culture.* Berkley, CA: University of California Press.

Mullard, C. (1986). *Pluralism, ethnicism and ideology: Implications for a transformative pedagogy.* (Publication Series, Working Paper No 2). Amsterdam: CRES.

Multicultural Leaders. (1993). *Working Sub-Committee Report on Discrimination in Schools.*

Mulvey, L. (1975). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen 16*(3)

Murphy, P., & Cassy, J. (2000, January 13-19 Vol 162 No 3). Media giants in $350bn tie-up. *The Guardian Weekly*, p.1.

Negus, K, (1996). *Popular theory in music: An introduction.* New England Wesleyan University Press.

Nero, C. (1991). Towards a black gay aesthetic in Essex Hemphill and Joseph Beam (Eds.), *Brother to brother: New writings by Black Gay men (pp.*229-252*.)* Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc.

Ng, Roxanne. (1993). Sexism, racism, Canadian nationalism. In H. Bannerji, (Ed.), *Returning the gaze: Essays on racism, feminism and politics* (pp. 182-196). Toronto: Sister Vision Press.

Nightingale, V. (1996). *Studying audience: The shock of the real.* London: Routledge

O'Farrell, Clare. (1989). *Foucault.* UK: Macmillan.

Omi, M., &, Winant, H. (1993). On the theoretical concept of race. In C.

McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 3-10). New York: Routledge.

Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1986). *Racial formation in the United States: From 1960s to 1980s.* New York: Routledge.

O'Shea, A. (1998). A special relationship? Cultural studies, academics and pedagogy. *Cultural Studies 12*(4), 513-527.

O'Sullivan, T., Hartley, J., Saunders, D., Montgomery, M., & Fiske, J. (Eds.). (1994). *Key concepts in communication and cultural studies.* UK: Routledge.
Parker, I. (1992). *Discourse dynamics: Critical analysis for social and individual psychology.* London: Routledge.

Payne, M. (Ed.). (1996). *A dictionary of cultural and critical theory.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Perkins, W. (1996). (Ed.) *Droppin' science: Critical essays on rap music and hip-hop culture.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Peshkin, A. (1988). In search of subjectivity-One's own. *Educational Researcher* 17(7), 17-22.

Philip, M., Nourbese. (1992). *Frontiers: Essays and writings on racism and culture.* Ontario: Mercury Press.

Pieterse, J. (1992). *White on black: Images of Africa and blacks in western popular culture.* New Haven: Yale University.

Plays, T. (1992). *Research decisions: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives.* Ontario: Harcourt Brace Janovanich Canada Inc.

Popkewitz, T. & Brennan, M. (Eds.). (1998). *Foucault's challenge: Discourse, knowledge and power in education.* Teachers College Press.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1988). Accomplishing attitudes: Facts and evaluation in racist discourse. In T. Van Dijk & R. Wodak (Eds.), *Text 8* (1-2) (pp.51-68).

Rich, A. (1979). *On lies, secrets and silence: Selected prose 1966-1978.* New York: W.W. Norton.

Richer, S. & Weir, L. (1995). Beyond political correctness: towards the inclusive university. Toronto, Buffalo: University of Toronto.

Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 516-529). California: Sage

Riley, K. (1985). Black Girls Speak for Themselves. In G. Weiner (ed.). *Just a Bunch of Girls* (pp. 63-76). Milton Keynes, Open University Press.

Rose, T. (1994). *Black Noise.* Hanover: University Press of New England.

Robertson, G., Mash, M., Tickner, L., Bird, J., Curtis, B., and Putnam, T. (Eds.), (1994). *Travellers' tales: Narratives of home and displacement.* U.K: Routledge.

Sarup, M. (1994). Home and identity. In G. Robertson, M. Mash, I. Tickner, J. Bird, B. Curtis & T. Putnam (Eds.), *Travellers' tales: Narratives of home and displacement* (pp. 93-104). U.K: Routledge.

Sarup, Madan (1991). *Education and the Ideology of racism.* Stoke-on-Trent, UK: Trentham Books.

Sayer, A. (1992) (2nd Ed). *Method in social science: A realist approach.* New York: Routledge.

Schick, C. (1995). Racial formation in the reporting of Canadian immigration figures. *36th Annual Adult Education Research Conference.* Edmonton: University of Alberta.

Schutz, A. (1972). *The phenomenology of the social world.* London: Heinemann.

Schwandt, T. (1984). Constructivist, interpretivist approaches to human inquiry. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp.118-137). California: Sage.

Seifeddine, S. (1994). *Changing mosaic: A needs assessment of immigrant youth in Edmonton.* Edmonton, AB: Mennonite Centre for Newcomers.

Shepard, B. (1997). *Deemed unsuitable.* Toronto: Umbrella Press.

Shepard, B. (1997). *Deemed unsuitable.* Toronto: Umbrella Press.

Shuker, R. (1998) *Key concepts in popular music.* New York: Routledge.

Sim, S. (Ed.), (1998). *The icon critical dictionary of postmodern thought.* London: Routledge.

Simmons, R. (1991). Some thoughts on the challenge facing black gay intellectuals. In E. Hemphill & J. Beam (Eds.) *Brother to brother: New writings by Black Gay men.* Boston: Alyson Publications, Inc.

Smith, P. (1988). *Discerning the subject.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Smith, P. (1999). Tommy Hilfiger and the age of costumization. http://mason.gmu.edu/~psmith5/hilfiger.html

Smith, D. (1986). Pluralism, race and ethnicity in selected countries. In J. Rex & D. Mason (Eds.), *Theories of race and ethnic relations* (pp. 187-225). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Solomon, P. (1992). *Black resistance in high school: Forging a separatist culture.* New York: SUNY Press.

Sparks, C. (1996). Stuart Hall, cultural studies and marxism. In D. Morley & K-H Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (pp. 71-101). London, UK: Routledge.

Spencer, J. (1995). *Under the gaze: The experiences of African Canadian students in two Edmonton high schools.* Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, Alberta.

Spender, D. (1982). *Invisible women: The schooling scandal.* London: Writers and Readers Publishing Co-operative Society.

Spivak, G. (1993). *Outside in the teaching machine.* New York: Routledge.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The ethnographic interview.* Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Springer, J., & Morton, L. (1998). *Ringmaster!* New York: St. Martins Press
Statistics Canada, (1996). 1996 Census: ethnic origin, visible minorities. *The Daily Statistics Canada.*

Stern. L. (2000, March 12). Urban legends: The irresistible bait of a great tale. *Edmonton Journal,* E8.

Stephens, M. (1998). Babylon's 'natural mystic': The North American music industry, the legend of Bob Marley, and the incorporation of transnationalism. *Cultural Studies 12*(2) pp. 139-167.

Stephens, R.J. (1996). *Keepin' it real: An Afrocentric aesthetic analysis of rap music and hip-hop subculture.* Ph.D Dissertation, Temple University.

Stoler, A. (1993). *Cultural theory and popular culture.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Stoler, A. (1996). *Race and the education of desire.* Duke University Press.

Storey, J. (1993). *An introductory guide to cultural theory and popular culture.* Athens: University of Georgia Press.

Storey, J. (1996). *Cultural studies & the study of popular culture.* Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press.

Stratton. J, & Ang, I. (1996). On the impossibility of a global cultural studies. In D. Morley & K-H Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 361-391). London, UK: Routledge.

Strinati, D. (1995). *An introduction to theories of popular culture*. UK: Routledge.

Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition.* Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Thakur, Andra. (1988). *The impact of schooling on visible minorities: A Case study of black students in Alberta secondary school.* Nanimo, BC: Malaspino College.

Thomas, K. (1996). "Ain't nothing like the real thing" Black masculinity, Gay masculinity and the jargon of authenticity. In Marcellus Blonny & George P. Cunningham (Eds.). *Representing Blackness (pp.55-69).* New York: Routledge.

Thomas, W., & Thomas, D. S. (1928). *The child in America: Behaviour problems and programs.* New York: Knopf.

Thompson, E. P. (1963). *Making of the English working class.* UK: Penguin.

Thompson, J. (1990). *Ideology and modern culture.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press

Torczyner, J. (1997). *Diversity, mobility, and change: The dynamics of Black communities in Canada.* Quebec, University of McGill: McGill Consortium for Ethnicity and Strategic Social Planning.

Turner, G. (1992). *British cultural studies.* UK: Routledge.

Thwaites, T., Davis, L. & Mules, W. (Eds.). (1994). *Tools for cultural studies: An introduction.* South Melbourne: Macmillan

Van Manen, M. (1984). *Action research as theory of the unique: From pedagogic thoughtfulness to pedagogic tactfulness.* Dept. Secondary Education, University of Alberta.

Wallace, M. (1990). *Invisibility blues.* New York: Verso.

Walcott, R. (1995). *Performing the postmodern: Black Atlantic rap & identity in North America.* Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Toronto, Toronto.

Walcott, R. (1997). *Black like who?* Toronto: Insomniac Press.

Walcott, R. (2000). *Rude.* Toronto: Insomniac Press.

Waters, M. (1995). *Globalization.* UK: Routledge.

Waters, M. (1994). *Modern sociological theory.* London: Sage Publications.
Wetherall, M, & Potter, J. (Eds.). (1992). *Mapping the language of racism.* New York: Columbia Press.

Weedon, C. (1987). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Werner, O. & Shoepfle, G. (1987). *Systematic fieldwork: Ethnographic analysis and data management*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications Inc.

White, A. (1995). *The resistance: Ten years of pop culture that shook the world*. New York: The Overlook Press

Williams, R. (1977). *Marxism and literature*. New York: Oxford University Press

Williams, R. (1974). *Television: Technology and cultural form*. UK: Fontona Collins.

Williams, R. (1958/1993). Culture is ordinary. In J. McIlroy & S. Westwood (Eds.), *Border Country*, (pp.89-102). Leicester, UK: National Institute of Continuing Adult Education.

Williamson, J. (1996). Two kinds of otherness: Black film and the Avant-garde. In In H.A. Baker, Jr., M, Diawara, & R. Lindeborg (Eds.), *Black British cultural studies*. (pp. 173-182). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labour*. UK: Saxon House.

Willis, P. (1990). *Common culture*. UK: Open University Press.

Winant, H. (1994). *Racial conditions politics, theory, comparisons.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

Wolff, J. (1983). *Aesthetics and the sociology of art*. London: Macmillan.

Wolff. J. (1993). *Social production of art*. New York: University Press.

Woodward, K. (1997) (Ed.) *Identity and difference*. London: Sage.

Yon, D. (1997 August) Interview with Kobena Mercer *Fuse 20*(4), pp.26-31

APPENDIX: A
Questioning Route

Introductory question:
Tell me a bit about yourself

1. What is it like to attend this high school?
Probes: How did you feel when it happened?
What do you think was the cause?
Has it happened to any one else? Can you give me an example?
Think back, when is attending this high schools a positive experience?
When is attending this high school not a positive experience?

1. Tell me how you spend your out of school time?
Probes: How often do you undertake this activity?
How did you get involved?
Who else is involved with this activity?

3. Tell me about who you "hang" with when outside school?
Probes: Can you give me an example of that?
Do they behave like that all the time?

4. What type of music do you listen to?
Probes: Who do you prefer to listen to?
Where do you listen to your favourite music?
If you want to find out more about your favourite type of music what do you do?

5. Tell me about the television programmes that you watched last week?
Probes: Which stars were in the show?
Where were you when you watched the show?

6. Tell me about the television programmes that you would not watch?
Probes: Are there times when you might watch those programmes?

7. Tell me about the magazines that you buy?
Probes: Would you browse through a magazine but not buy it?
Give me an example of a magazine that you browsed through recently but did not buy?

APPENDIX: B
Letter of Consent for Participants.

Department of Educational Policy Studies
7-104 Education Building North
Tel: 492-7625

Dear Student,

I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Educational Policy Studies and I would like your help with my research project on the cultural formation of identity among African Canadian/ Black high school students.

I am interested in finding out what magazines you read, which television programmes you watch as well as the types of films you enjoy or do not enjoy. I will have an initial "focus group" where you can get together with other African Canadian/Black students to discuss school in general and popular cultural forms in particular (e.g., films, magazines, music, television programmes). The "focus group" will consist of all young women or all young men.
The initial focus groups will last about 1hour depending on how the discussions develop. They will take place either at school or another location that is suitable for everyone.

After the initial focus group I will select six to eight students to interview in depth. If you are selected I would like to meet with you three or four times for about 1 –1.5 hours each time.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and if you wish to change your mind, at any point, you may withdraw. I will audiotape all our interviews to make sure that I get full access to your words and to enable a more detailed analysis of your insights. Once our interviews are recorded, I will assign you an assumed name. I will use your assumed name when writing up the transcripts and no one, other than myself, will have access to my tapes.

I feel that this area of work is important and can offer insights into how students come to view themselves and how they relate to their peers. To date very little research has been undertaken in Canada on the topic of African Canadian/ Black high school students so I would really appreciate you help.

If you are interested then please sign the form below and return it to me.

Thanks very much for taking the time to read the letter and I hope that you will participate!

Jennifer Kelly (Ph.D. student)

I agree to participate in Ms. J.R Kelly's research project and understand that I can withdraw at anytime I wish without any repercussions for my friends or myself.

Name/Signature of Student___________________________ Date_______